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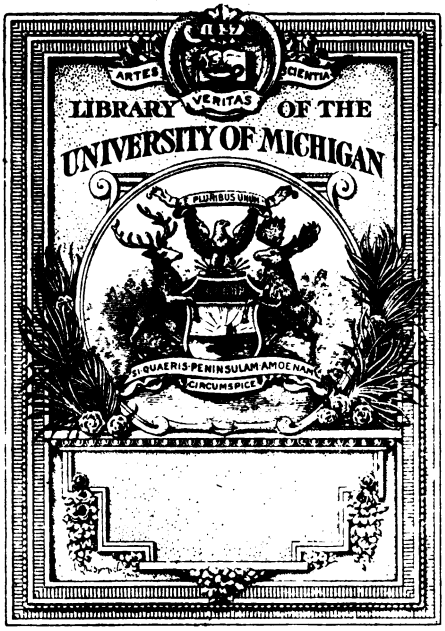
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THOUGHTS ON THE BIBLE.

By the Rev. W. GRESLEY, M.A.
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THOUGHTS ON THE BIBLE.

LETTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

My dear Friend,

You ask me to recommend you a book which shall explain the difficulties which some persons now-a-days fancy they find in the Bible. The faith of many, you say, has been shaken by the current literature of the day, and you have not been able to find exactly what you want, either for your own reading, or to place in the hands of your friends, who, in common with yourself, wish to meet the difficulties which have been brought before them, and to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in them.

Well, there are many very excellent books; but I do not know that they are exactly what you require. There is Butler's Analogy. Every

student for Holy Orders, and every man of education who really desires to enter into the subject, should read Butler's Analogy three or four times over, until he has mastered every page of it. Then there are Paley's Volumes on the Evidences, the Horæ Paulinæ, and Natural Theology. These are excellent and sound books, more lively than Butler, and perfectly unanswerable in argument; they have never been refuted, and never can be. We sadly want another Paley amongst us. I wish they were more read than they are. Perhaps the reason of their being read less than they used to be is that they are somewhat out of date. The objections against revealed religion have taken a new turn; new cases have arisen, and modern science has developed many fresh illustrations of the goodness and wisdom of GOD which were not known in Paley's time.

I am really not able to direct you to the sort of book which you require. So there is no help for it but that I must try and write one myself[1].

[1] There is a very good book on the Catalogue of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, "Why do you believe the Bible to be the Word of GOD?" by Josiah Bateman, M.A., which embraces some of the topics contained in this volume, but the general scope is different.

There are also many excellent books on different branches

A bold undertaking! you will say, and somewhat presumptuous to class oneself with such men as Butler and Paley. But in truth the book that is wanted is not any thing very learned or very scientific, but a common-sense popular view of the facts in question.

Let me first set before you what is the view which I propose to take of the subject. I do not intend so much to answer objections or explain the difficulties raised by men of science or of learning, as rather to show that such objections and difficulties are not such as can reasonably shake the faith of men of ordinary sense and candour. Objections there must needs be, as I think the following arguments will show, even on Christian principles.

1. If, as we believe, revelation and science emanate both from the Great God and source of all things, they must needs both be true. But seeing that we imperfectly understand both one and the other, it is clear that they must often *appear* to differ. This is no paradox. The difficulties which we imagine arise not from any real discrepancies between science or religion, but from our imperfect understanding of them.

of the subject in the Catalogues of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and the Christian Evidence Society.

2. Again, religion is in its essence, "One and the same through all advancing time,"—at least there has been no new revelation since the time of our LORD JESUS CHRIST and His Apostles. Science on the other hand, is always moving, always advancing. The discoveries of one generation serve but as a stepping-stone, or rather a foundation on which to build future discoveries. It will be said, perhaps, that criticism also advances; scholars of the present generation are better critics than those of the past. Yes, but what is the object of criticism—criticism of the Bible, I mean? Simply to ascertain the exact meaning of the ancient sacred writers, to correct the text which has been corrupted by length of time, and bring it back to its original purity; to make sure of the real meaning of the words when spoken or written by our LORD or His Apostles. Why do we think so much of the early Fathers? It is because we believe that their proximity to the age of the Apostles is, to a great extent, a guarantee that their interpretation of the words of the Apostles is correct, and the facts which they describe are legitimate developments of the Apostles' doctrines. Thus the very advance of criticism is a proof of what I asserted. Its object is not to go forward, but to go backward

to ancient truth. Revelation is, like its great Founder, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; whereas it is the boast of science that it is perpetually improving. What is the necessity of troubling oneself to reconcile the statements of the Bible in all particulars with geology, when geology is confessedly in a state of progress, and the opinions of the next generation may be as much in advance of the present as the present is of the past. So as regards Ethnology, Philology, Anthropology, and other sciences, which so much interest a number of clever men; they have almost sprung up within the present generation, and every year is adding to the facts on which they rest. How then can they be compared with what is fixed and eternal?

3. Again, Revelation professes to be a communication from the Great and Infinite GOD, to us poor finite creatures. If every part of Revelation were easily intelligible, and free from difficulty, it might be possible that it emanated from the human intellect. The very fact of there being in it things which surpass our knowledge, and are addressed to our faith, harmonizes with the belief that it proceeds from a source higher than man. Must not the relation of the finite to the Infinite, the creature to the Creator, be full of difficulties? Even

between man and man, the highly educated and the illiterate, how wide is the difference. How many things are there, for instance, which GOD's ministers have mastered by study, but which are a perfect enigma to the ploughman or the mechanic; or even, be it spoken with great respect, to the philosopher, or the politician, or the eminent lawyer, if they have not given their minds to theological studies. And we can imagine that minds of the highest order, whether the highly-gifted yet humble-minded of our fellow-men, or the angels of heaven, may see no difficulty in what perplexes many of us ordinary mortals. And there are many things which are greater difficulties to the educated than to the uneducated. Before the last century most persons read the first chapter of Genesis, as many read it now, without discerning or even suspecting any difficulty whatever. The science of geology has caused doubts, which at first perplexed even well-disposed and intelligent men; but which a juster appreciation of the relation between science and revelation has now, we trust, greatly removed. There always have been difficulties, and always will be until the human mind has mastered the whole cycle of natural science, and knows in all its bearings the whole counsel of GOD. There are mysteries

into which even the angels desire to look. Therefore the existence of difficulties is no presumption whatever against the truth of Revelation.

The subject on which I propose to treat in the following letters cannot be better expressed than in the words of St. Augustine, in one of his letters to St. Jerome: "I have learned, I confess, to pay such deference to the canonical books of Scripture, and to them alone, that I most firmly believe that none of their writers have ever fallen into any error in writing. And if I meet with any thing in them which seems to me to be contrary to truth, I doubt not that either the manuscript is in fault, or that the translator has missed the truth, or that I myself have not rightly apprehended it." (Aug. Epist. ad Hieron. xxxii.)

I do not deny that there are difficulties, and some apparent contradictions, and many things hard to be understood; but I undertake to show that, notwithstanding these, the Bible is the Word of GOD, and altogether true, given for our instruction and salvation.

LETTER II.

THE PROBABILITY THAT GOD WOULD GIVE US A REVELATION, AND THE MODE IN WHICH HE HAS VERIFIED IT.

THE Bible appears before us as a communication from GOD to man. More properly speaking, it is a record of many communications, and various dealings with mankind: "GOD who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His SON."

But how are we sure, some might ask, that GOD hath thus spoken to us? Why should He take the trouble to hold such communication? I answer,—First, it is reasonable to suppose that He who placed us on the earth, and made us what we are, and bestowed on us so many benefits, should teach us why He placed us here—what was the object for which He created us—what is our relation to Him—what our duties. Except from what He has told us, we

have little or no knowledge of these things, we cannot tell whence we came or whither we go —what we have to do now we are here. Philosophy and science cannot teach us these things, or at least very vaguely. In short, but for what He has revealed to us our existence would be an enigma. Then, being the work of His hand, He has a Father's feeling towards us. Every good father trains up his children in the way in which they should go, teaches them what is good, and helps them to walk in the right path. And such has been our heavenly FATHER'S dealing with us. Moreover He is our Ruler; and it was to be expected that He would explain to us the laws by which He would have us live—our duties and responsibilities. On every account, therefore, it seems quite reasonable, and to be expected, that He who made and placed us here, should take some means of communicating to us a knowledge of His laws, and of our duties, of our position here, and what is prepared for us hereafter.

But now, supposing it to be a thing not unlikely, but rather highly probable, or even certain, that GOD should communicate to His creatures the knowledge of such things as are necessary for them to know, let us consider in what manner it was likely that He should

make such communication. Of the Nature and Presence of the great Creator of Heaven and Earth we know little. He hath Himself said, "There can no man see My face and live." It was necessary for Him to veil His Glory—to disrobe Himself of His Majesty, if He revealed Himself to us; or to send messengers to us from amongst our fellow-men, authorized and commissioned to teach us His Will. And, this being so, let us consider within ourselves how He could make us know for a surety that those sent by Him really had received a commission to speak to us in His Name. Can we think of any other mode of verifying the mission of those whom He would send to us, than that which He adopted, namely, the arming them with powers such as no man without God's sanction or authority could exercise. If there was to be, as we have seen was reasonable, a communication, or series of communications, from GOD to man, it is difficult, nay, rather, it is impossible to think of any mode in which men could be sure that the communication really was from GOD, except by the power which He should give His ministers to verify their mission. It is very probable that GOD may be continually working miracles which we know

not of. But the miracles by which He verified the mission of those who at divers times spake in His Name, were palpable and wonderful—such as to strike the senses of those who witnessed them, and those who have received the record of them. Thus when Nicodemus came to JESUS by night, he said unto Him, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from GOD: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest"—miracles of such wondrous power and goodness united—"except GOD be with him." So when Elijah had restored the widow's son to life, she said, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of GOD, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth."

Consider the principal occasions on which miraculous agency was exercised. We know that in very early times the knowledge of the One true GOD was well-nigh lost upon earth. Even the scientific Egyptians worshipped cows and crocodiles. The vilest crimes and most horrible cruelties were practised amongst the nations of the earth. Was it not a time, if ever, for GOD to interfere? Accordingly, He chose one nation from the rest to be the recipients of His laws, and, after a variety of adventures, He commissioned Moses, His servant, to lead them out of Egypt, into a land

which He had promised to their fathers, and by a series of wonderful miracles, in some of which Moses was the chief agent, in others of which GOD wrought Himself, "by a mighty hand and outstretched arm," He led them into the promised land, and gave them a code of righteous laws. If it was right and reasonable that the Creator should regard the good of His creatures, and not, like the fancied gods of Epicurus, leave them to take care of themselves; if it was proper for a ruler to give laws to his subjects, or a father to care for his children, surely this was a fitting time for God to interfere in the affairs of men, and to send His messenger, whose mission should be verified by the power of miracles.

Much more when the time came for sending the LORD JESUS CHRIST to redeem mankind. When we consider the state of the world at the time of the mission of our LORD, the cruelties and immoralities of even the most enlightened nations, the degrading superstition of the old Pagan system, it was certainly "the fulness of time" for GOD to exert His power for the benefit of His creatures. Accordingly He sent His SON JESUS CHRIST, and He again sent His Apostles after Him, and their successors, to be the instructors of the world throughout all ages.

These, too, were at first armed with the power of miracles, in order that they might establish the truth of their mission. Is not the whole of the account of these transactions strictly according to reason and probability?

There are some persons who consider miracles impossible, and will not believe them. Others, on the contrary, believe them to be the most reasonable and probable events. That GOD should communicate with His people, that the mission of His messengers should be attested by miracles, seems to the latter to bear on the face of it the character of perfect reasonableness. So far these two classes of persons differ in opinion *toto cœlo*. Each considers the other to be mistaken. Who is to decide? Surely history and testimony must decide. We have received detailed accounts of all these wondrous transactions. Moses and Joshua, and others, have handed down to us the history of the great events of their own times. The Evangelists and Apostles, who were witnesses of our LORD'S ministry, have written the account of His life and wonderful deeds. If we can believe any other of the events of history, we have certainly reason to believe the history of these. From the very time of their promulgation, they have been received as undoubted truth by the

ablest and most learned men of successive ages. Modern civilization is founded on them. The most refined and enlightened nations of the world accept them. Surely that is enough to warrant our acceptance of the facts which we find recorded in the Bible.

LETTER III.

HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO BE WRITTEN.

THE account given by St. Luke of the reasons which induced him to write his Gospel will furnish us with an instance of the perfectly natural manner in which the different books of the Bible came to be written.

"Forasmuch," says the Evangelist, "as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed."

Before the Gospels were written, the sayings and doings of our LORD were known and believed by a great number of persons in consequence of the testimony and preaching of the Apostles, and

of those appointed to the work of the ministry. And, as it was natural, some of the early disciples had taken in hand, as St. Luke says, to set forth in order a declaration—that is, to give a statement or account—of those things which were believed among the first Christians. But it is evident that it was most important that before the death of the Apostles and their contemporaries, the history of these great events should be drawn up by men who had actually seen and heard, or knew from unexceptionable testimony all that had happened. This was the cause of St. Luke writing his Gospel, and, no doubt, the same reason influenced the other Evangelists. St. Matthew and St. John had been with our LORD during the whole of His ministry, and, therefore, could give an exact account of the things which they had witnessed. St. John, we know, was the special friend of our LORD—the disciple whom JESUS loved. St. Matthew was constantly with Him. St. Luke tells us that he too had perfect understanding of all things from the very first. He had learned perhaps from the Blessed Virgin Mary herself the wonderful circumstances which preceded and accompanied the birth of JESUS. He is thought by some to have been one of the seventy disciples whom our LORD commissioned during His lifetime.

He was the constant companion of St. Paul, as he preached the Gospel throughout the world—the account of which he has given in his book of the Acts of the Apostles. It does not appear whether or not St. Mark was an eye-witness of the great events of our LORD's life, with St. Matthew and St. John; but he had ample opportunity of knowing the certainty of them, being the nephew of St. Barnabas, and the companion of the early disciples. So that even humanly speaking, and without adverting now to Divine inspiration, we have four unimpeachable witnesses of the events recorded—two of whom, at least, were eye-witnesses of our LORD's ministry.

Compare the testimony of the Evangelists with the history of modern events. When the terrible conflict which is now going on in Europe shall have been brought to an end people will wish to know in order, as St. Luke says, the certainty of the events that are occurring, and, no doubt, many will take in hand to write the history of them. Many French or Prussian officers, or correspondents of newspapers who have been eye-witnesses of the bombardment of Strasburg, the siege of Metz or of Paris, or the dreadful battles which have been fought, and the sufferings of the sick and

wounded, and of the inhabitants of the seat of war, or the still more dreadful occurrences of the insurrection in Paris, will give narratives of all that they have witnessed, and so the history of the war will be handed down to after generations. But we should note one important difference between the events which are now being enacted and the Gospel history. No one could from his own knowledge give an account of all the incidents of the war, because they have happened in many different places at the same time, so that no one could have witnessed them all. The historian of the times must gather his information from the testimony of different persons who in different places have been eye-witnesses of what has been happening, as we may suppose St. Luke obtained his information of the early days of our LORD. But in the case of our LORD'S public ministry all the events were witnessed by the twelve Apostles, who immediately after our LORD'S departure, began to declare to the world all that they had seen and heard—and two of whom for the greater certainty wrote them in the Gospels.

But now it might, perhaps, be asked, How are we sure that the four Gospels, which we have in our Bibles, are the same accounts which

were written by the Evangelists, and that our LORD really lived, and died, and rose again as there described?

First, I would ask what reason have we to believe otherwise? We have many other historians of the same date, or thereabouts—Cæsar, Sallust, Tacitus, Josephus, and others, who describe the history of their own times. We believe *them*. We have the letters or Epistles of Cicero, which are appealed to as undoubted evidence of the facts to which they refer. What reason have we to doubt the testimony of the writers of the Gospels?

The following illustration will, I think, serve to show that we have even stronger evidence of the truth of the Gospels than we have of any other extant history. There are, as we all know, thirty or forty thousand sermons preached every Sunday in the churches of this country, all of which have a text of Scripture at the beginning, and all of which, more or less, refer to the events of our LORD'S life. Now, quotations from a book prove the existence of the book itself, even though we had it not in our hands. Well, let us go back a few centuries—to the Reformation of the Church, for instance, in the sixteenth century. We know that sermons were preached and texts quoted at that time, just as they are

now. It is clear, therefore, that the Bible existed in those days, otherwise there could be no quotations from it. Go back still farther, to the days of St. Chrysostom, or St. Augustine. Still there are the same continual quotations of texts. And not only quotations, but there are Commentaries on Holy Scripture, or explanations of the different parts of the Bible, as we have now. Go up still higher, to the very time immediately after the Scriptures of the New Testament were said to have been written; and still we find, in the books which have come down to us from those times, quotations and allusions to all the parts of our LORD's history.

Or, to take a downward survey, beginning from the first, instead of tracing the testimony upward. Read the account of the doings of the Day of Pentecost, only ten days after the departure of our LORD into heaven, before the Scriptures were written. You find the Apostle speaking of the facts of our SAVIOUR's life as well known and undeniable. "Ye men of Israel," he says, "hear these words. JESUS of Nazareth, a man approved of GOD among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which GOD did by Him in the midst of you, as ye also know" (it was but a few weeks since He had

raised Lazarus from the dead, as all Jerusalem knew), "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel of GOD, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." (They could not deny it. The fact was notorious amongst them.)

You see that in the very first sermon ever preached distinct mention is made of the mighty works, the life and death of our LORD, and that before men who knew perfectly well the things which had happened, and could at once have contradicted St. Peter, if what he said had been false.

Or if, as some might prefer, we take our start from the Epistles of St. Paul, which all of us must feel to be real letters written to real persons, we find the same facts spoken of as undeniable, and as forming the basis of the Christian Church and doctrine. Other writers allude to the same events, and presently begin to quote the words of Scripture, which by that time had been written; and so downwards to the present time. There never has been a break in this undeniable testimony to our LORD'S life and doctrine.

I have spoken of the Gospels because they are the most important books in the Bible, and all the rest depend on them. The book of the

Acts of the Apostles is a continuation of the narrative; the Epistles all arise out of the facts recorded. Our LORD Himself bears testimony to the inspiration of the Old Testament. The Old Testament rests on the testimony of our Lord's own word. The truth of the Gospels being established, the truth of the rest of the Bible follows of necessity.

LETTER IV.

VAST IMPORTANCE OF THE BIBLE.

THE opponents of the Bible sometimes adopt an arrogant and supercilious tone about it which is offensive. Some, indeed, speak of it in a patronizing tone as a "grand old book," much as they would speak of old Herodotus, or Homer. This tone is caught, I imagine, from the newspapers. Newspaper writers are, conventionally at least, superior to their readers in this respect, that they are able to communicate to them important information of which their readers are ignorant. It is their business to obtain and dispense information, and in this respect they occupy a certain vantage-ground, and are for the moment masters of the situation. From giving information on subjects on which their readers are ignorant, newspaper writers have come to adopt the same tone in commenting upon their intelligence. Hence the arrogant lan-

guage which some newspapers use in their leading articles.

The tone of newspaper writers is commonly adopted by essayists and reviewers, and somewhat exaggerated by the confidence with which all men are wont to speak on religious matters. What I wish at this moment to suggest for consideration is the question whether this class of men, essayists and reviewers, men of science and philosophy, really have any ground for assuming the sort of supercilious tone which some of them adopt in speaking of the Bible and the Church, or whether the truest philosophy does not consist in deferring to the authority of the Bible as the highest source of information?

For example: A great debate takes place, not only in scientific Reviews but in public meetings of the "Association for the Promotion of Science," on the question of the origin of life—some arguing that life must proceed from life, *omne vivum ex vivo*, others that life may originate from dead matter, and the question is involved whence life originally proceeded. But is there any need of all this discussion? We learn from the Bible that GOD created the heaven and the earth and all things in them; that He made the first man

from the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the breath of life, and so man became a living soul. Is not the man, or even the school-child, who believes that life proceeded from GOD, on the authority of GOD'S Word, better informed on that particular matter than many a philosopher? I remember to have seen in an old Bible a picture representing a venerable man meant for the Almighty breathing into the face of a stiff stark figure without life. Surely the child who believes that that picture symbolizes a great truth and principle of our existence, actually knows more than the man who cannot make up his mind as to what is the origin of the life of man. I do not mean to question the importance of philosophical investigations. On the contrary, I believe that they will all tend to the confirmation of GOD'S Word, if confirmation were needed. What I object to is the notion that Philosophy can teach us more certainly that which is already revealed in Holy Scripture, specially on such subjects. In many points philosophy can teach us absolutely nothing, as, for instance, respecting the condition of the soul hereafter and the way of eternal life.

There is another point of view in which the

immense importance of the subject-matter of the Bible may be contrasted favourably with human affairs. I mean in respect to the interests involved. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Consider only the tremendous issues involved in the Bible. It is a question of an eternity of happiness or woe. The ablest men in the world believe it to be so. Surely persons who seriously thought on this subject could never speak disparagingly of the great questions involved in GOD'S Word. What speculation can be in the slightest degree comparable in importance to the winning eternal life—what risk so tremendous as the risk of losing happiness eternal?

Again, take the politician's occupation. Surely the statesman who believes that the human beings under his authority have souls to be saved, and that the Bible and the Church of GOD are the divinely-appointed means of saving souls, must be constrained by his conscience to adopt every method in his power whereby the grand object of human life shall be promoted.

I argue, then, that it is unphilosophical and unworthy of an intelligent age to disparage the interests of religion, and consider the doctrines

of the Church of infinitesimal value, in comparison with the subject-matter of science, or literature, or politics.

In further confirmation of this position, I would point to eminent men in different departments of life, and maintain unhesitatingly that those whose lives are occupied in expounding the Bible or promoting the religious welfare of the people are not inferior, to say the least, to men in any other department of knowledge. In one period of the world Churchmen were *facile principes*, in almost every department—in literature, science, and politics. In the present day they are as great orators, as able writers, and profound thinkers—in short, in every way men of as exalted intellect, as those in any other department of human knowledge. Therefore to affect to despise such men, or to speak disparagingly of the religion which they teach, proves rather the prejudiced views of those who allow themselves to indulge in such a practice.

One more argument let me bring before you, and that is the extraordinary influence which the Bible has had on the institutions and domestic habits of modern Europe. According to the ordinary progress of events, one would have expected that as the civilization of Greece

spread itself to Rome, and resulted in a new type analogous in some respects, but superior in others, so the civilization of Rome would have been the prime influence in the development of the family of European nations. Instead of which, a new element has come in, derived from Jewish literature, i. e. the Bible. How can ethnologists explain on mere human principles the extraordinary influence which the feeble nation of the Jews has acquired over the powerful and civilized nations of modern Europe? How can they account for the influence of Jewish literature and Jewish thought which has had such a marvellous effect for the last eighteen hundred years? The precepts contained in the Jewish records are as household words. Even our newspapers are full of Scriptural allusions. We give our sons and daughters names taken out of the Bible, names of the Jewish patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and holy women: John, Matthew, Peter, James, Thomas, Mary, Martha, Anna, Elizabeth, all these are names of men and women of the Jewish race. We name not only our churches, but our streets, our great buildings, after them. The palace of our sovereign is called St. James', our House of Parliament St. Stephen's, our greatest hospitals St. Thomas' and St. Bartholomew's.

Our literature is full of allusions to passages in the Bible: Treat the Bible as a common book, and no consistent account can be given of its wonderful influence. Nothing but the supernatural element in it can present a plausible solution of the power which it has exercised.

LETTER V.

THE WONDERFUL FORCE OF THE BIBLE.

No book was ever written which has such wonderful force—or has produced such astonishing effects on men individually as the Bible. Truly, as it is written, the Word of GOD is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Hundreds and thousands of men in every generation, and in every station of life, have experienced the searching influence of the Bible. The same Word which brings instruction in holiness to the seeker after truth, peace and comfort to the believer, is full also of cutting reproof, stern upbraiding, and bitter forebodings to the sceptic, the unbeliever, and the wicked. They cannot escape it; they cannot put from them the thought that, in spite of all their endeavours to disbelieve, the Bible may after all be true, and if so, will surely condemn them. They who

believe have rest and peace, they know whom they trust, they believe in the inheritance prepared for them, they know that they have a sure title to happiness with GOD in heaven, and they have the earnest of their inheritance in present peace of mind, trust and confidence in GOD's love, delight in His service, hope and joy, and a full persuasion that they have found peace and happiness in the favour and promises of their GOD. But to unbelievers all this ground of peace is cut away from beneath their feet; they have no confidence or hopeful expectation, but rather a certain looking forward to judgment and misery. All is vague and unsatisfactory in this life, as well as in their expectation of the future; they have no certain rule of life, no sure resting-place, every thing is gloomy, dark, uncertain, restless, perplexing,—that is, if they are men of any serious thought. There is a sanctifying power in GOD's WORD, an influence for holiness, a power given to resist evil, to yield the soul to what is good and righteous, which is wanting in those who reject its calm authority.

The Bible treats of matters far beyond the scope of man's invention; it explains to us facts and principles which no science has ever been able to discover, no thought could ever fathom.

How could we ever have known our own position in the scale of nature, and our relation to GOD, our creation in His image, our fall, our redemption, but from the pages of GOD'S Word? What human intellect, uninstructed by GOD'S Word, has been able to explain or elucidate these marvellous truths? From GOD'S Word we learn that, being created in holiness, Adam and Eve fell by disobedience, and that the state in which we now live is one of remedial process, in which, by the atonement made for sin, our transgression may be put away, and our spirit, soul, and body may be regenerated and restored to holiness by the operation of the HOLY GHOST. The whole Bible consists more or less of a series of means through the application of which GOD designs to raise us by our own free will to holiness and salvation. Read in this light every page teems with help and encouragement. Again, the Bible is full of devotional matter suited most wonderfully to our wants. No other book has any thing like it. Read the Psalms of David, and see how marvellously applicable they are to our spiritual state under almost every circumstance of joy or sorrow, triumph or humiliation, trust in GOD, or conviction of sin. They seem, as it were, to dissect and analyze the inmost emotions of the soul,

and lay them bare to the light of day, and provide nourishment and medicine for every requirement and ailment of the human heart. Composed long ago, and at different times, they have descended to us in these latter days, and afford matter for holy meditation and daily use for the penitent sinner, or the faithful servant of GOD in the nineteenth century, as they did three thousand years ago. It has always appeared to me that the Book of Psalms in itself is a standing miracle, showing by its internal character the evidence of its divine original. Modern piety or ingenuity has never furnished a book of devotion so searching, so penetrating, and so adapted to every phase of the human soul.

Scarcely less wonderful, though in a different way, are the shrewd and homely proverbs of Solomon, which exhibit to us the same searching power in reference to worldly wisdom, as the Psalms of David evince in the finer element of spiritual devotion. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy path. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil." Surely these are the true

principles of human conduct. When we consider that these wise and soul-stirring books existed long before the rise of philosophy in Greece, when ethics were first reduced to a system, that they appeared amongst a people who, apart from miraculous interposition, and the divine inspiration of their writers, were far from being a clever or intellectual race, we must acknowledge the marvellousness of the phenomenon exhibited by their very existence in that period of the world's history.

In the books of the Prophets we find, besides the most lofty sentiments, undeniable evidence of a power of foretelling future events, which could have proceeded from no other source than a divine original.

Bringing our survey down to the books of the New Testament, we have the fulfilment of prophecy in the record of the Incarnation of the SON of GOD and the final offer of salvation to mankind; and above all, the delineation of the perfect character of JESUS, far beyond the conception of human excellence by any poet or philosopher whom the world has ever produced.

But the Word of GOD is not only quick and powerful to teach us our real character, but it is also efficacious to furnish us with remedies

against the evils which we detect, safeguards against our weakness, help for our infirmities, comfort in our distress. It can not only probe the wounds of our spirit, but it can pour into them the balm of consolation. It can soothe the wounded spirit, give us health, and hope, and salvation. In short, it is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS. I say, then, without fear of contradiction, that no other book was ever composed which has any thing like the moral efficacy of the Bible—its power and acuteness is far beyond any thing else which was ever written.

The difficulty is that these divine characteristics of the Bible are to the sceptic and unbeliever, who are prejudiced against it, in a manner incomprehensible. Those who do not feel the touching devotion of the Psalms, for instance, cannot be argued into understanding it. They have not the faculty for it. They who see no beauty in the character of our LORD, no superhuman excellence in His teaching, can hardly be touched with the conviction of His divine nature. They are like men without an ear for music, or without the faculty of discerning colours. But they may at least do this—they may exercise their reason upon the evidence of the truth of the Bible. They may strive against the beset-

ting sins of their own hearts—cultivate humility, sincerity, and truth. Then the HOLY SPIRIT will grant them the faculty of appreciating the doctrine, "He that will do the will of GOD shall know of the doctrine whether it be of GOD."

LETTER VI.

ALL SCRIPTURE INSPIRED.

Now, seeing that undeniably the Bible exercises, and has exercised, an influence on the human mind, and on the affairs of the world, such as no other book has ever exercised, and not only with uncivilized and unintellectual nations, but with the most intelligent and highly gifted in the world, surely it is unwise and unphilosophical to think lightly of the Bible or to treat it as a common book. A higher intelligence must dictate to us the opinion, or rather the certainty, that there must be in it something very different, something much beyond the character of any thing else that was ever written. And what is the difference? Simply this: that whereas other books have been written by the wisdom and intellect of man—the Bible was dictated and written by the inspiration of GOD. And such has been the firm belief of Christians of all ages. The best and purest minds in the world for eighteen hundred years have

always believed the Bible to be the inspired Word of God. If it were not so, how can we account for its astonishing and undeniable influence on the minds and on the affairs of men?

Let us consider the claim which the Bible itself makes on our belief of its inspiration.

There is a peculiar form of argument recently much used by the sceptical school, the fallacy of which I do not remember to have seen commented on. It is to this effect: that if a text of Scripture is disputed, if a few writers, or even one, have questioned its genuineness, or doubted its interpretation, thenceforth that text is, so to speak, tainted or suspected, and cannot be used with any force in controversy. A remarkable instance of this sort of argument is found in Dr. Williams' climax about Messianic prophecies. Some of these prophecies have been disputed, he says; Bishop Kidder doubts the applicability of one, Bishop So-and-So of another, Baron Bunsen of a third, until there are not more than two or three remaining which are not disputed, and these no doubt might be easily "melted down in the crucible[1]" (such, if I remember right, is the expression), and so none would remain. I never

[1] Essays and Reviews, p. 70.

remember to have seen so reckless, overbearing, and irrational a statement; and yet I suppose it was expected to carry weight with some persons, or it would not have been made. If there really is any reasonable doubt as to the genuineness of the text, as there may be in the case of the three witnesses (see 1 St. John v. 7), then of course we cannot honestly insist on that text as of undoubted certainty, or as a proof of doctrine; but in the numerous cases in which we entertain no doubt whatever as to their genuineness and true interpretation, then the establishment of our argument depends on our maintaining them. The battle for truth is to be fought on the very ground of the truth of texts, and the true meaning of them. We do not for a moment admit that the fact of their having been disputed renders them doubtful: for in truth there is no single text or doctrine in the Bible which may not be disputed by men who maintain that "everlasting" may not mean "lasting for ever," or that GOD's inspired Word may not be true.

It is the last of these questions that I wish to dwell on. And, first, the meaning of the text—"All Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD."

There are some very good men who say you must not rest on this text, because it is doubtful.

My answer is, no genuine text is really doubtful —every text has a meaning; this text must have some one definite meaning. We must not give it up because it has been disputed, but endeavour to ascertain what its real meaning is. What, then, has been alleged against receiving this text in its plain and literal meaning? It is said that commentators have questioned whether the Greek word translated "given by inspiration of GOD" is the predicate or part of the subject; that is, whether it is rightly translated "All Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD and is profitable," or "All Scripture given by inspiration of GOD is also profitable." But in truth the sense would be just the same in the latter case as in the former as regards its application to Holy Scripture. It would run thus—"All Scripture being inspired by GOD," and not all that part of Scripture which is inspired. The inspiration of the whole of Scripture would be equally affirmed.

The passage of Scripture before us is even stronger in the original than in our translation. It is not only "all Scripture," as if the whole were taken collectively, but "every Scripture," that is, every part of Scripture is inspired by GOD. It would be inconsistent with the proposition to say that some books were

inspired and some were not, or that some subjects were inspired and some not: that the doctrinal parts, for instance, were inspired, and the historical uninspired; that the descriptions of ordinary events were inspired, but not the supernatural and extraordinary; that the history of the building of the Temple, or of the captivity, was inspired, but that we need not believe the history of the Exodus, or of the sacrifice of Isaac, or other historical events;—that we might choose to believe those which we thought credible, and discard the rest. This could not be the meaning of the words, "every Scripture is GOD-inspired." We must consider the whole volume which the Church accepts as Scripture to come under the theory of inspiration.

This one text, therefore, as received by the Church, may be taken by believers as conclusive of the inspiration of every part of Scripture. But there are many other texts which corroborate and confirm it—as, for example, 2 St. Pet. i. 21: "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST." So 1 Thess. ii. 13: "For this cause also thank we GOD without ceasing, because when ye received the Word of GOD,

LETTER V.

THE WONDERFUL FORCE OF THE BIBLE.

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believe have rest and peace, they know whom they trust, they believe in the inheritance prepared for them, they know that they have a sure title to happiness with GOD in heaven, and they have the earnest of their inheritance in present peace of mind, trust and confidence in GOD's love, delight in His service, hope and joy, and a full persuasion that they have found peace and happiness in the favour and promises of their GOD. But to unbelievers all this ground of peace is cut away from beneath their feet; they have no confidence or hopeful expectation, but rather a certain looking forward to judgment and misery. All is vague and unsatisfactory in this life, as well as in their expectation of the future; they have no certain rule of life, no sure resting-place, every thing is gloomy, dark, uncertain, restless, perplexing,—that is, if they are men of any serious thought. There is a sanctifying power in GOD's Word, an influence for holiness, a power given to resist evil, to yield the soul to what is good and righteous, which is wanting in those who reject its calm authority.

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LETTER VII.

WHAT IS INSPIRATION?

It is often asked what is the true theory of Inspiration? Supposing all Scripture to be inspired, what is inspiration?

Now there are many things which cannot be logically defined. Inspiration may be one of them. There may be something in inspiration too deep and impalpable to be exactly defined in human language. One thing, however, I think, may be affirmed with certainty: namely, that *what is inspired, cannot be false;* and therefore if every part of Scripture is inspired by God, every part is unquestionably true. Our Lord Himself continually appeals to Scripture as of undoubted truth. So do the Apostles, so do the fathers of the Church, so do God's ministers in the present generation. How could we teach religion at all if we were obliged to enter upon the proof that each quotation was true. No—we verily believe, and the Church of all ages has believed, that

every part of Scripture is inspired by GOD, and that what is inspired by GOD is true. In fact, to say that a thing is inspired, and yet is false, is a contradiction in terms.

But then objectors say—by this theory you make the inspired writers mere machines in the hands of the Spirit, with no more will of their own than the pens with which they wrote. Well—what if it were so? But it is not. We believe that the writers of Scripture wrote according to their own idiosyncrasy and personal ability. We see that in fact there is a great deal of individual character in the different writers of Holy Scripture. Every one must discern the wonderful poetic energy which breathes in the writings of some of the older prophets, as compared with other writers. The Book of Isaiah and the Book of Proverbs are totally different in style. St. Luke and St. Paul write in a different manner from the other Evangelists. There is, in fact, as much difference as between Grote and Macaulay, Manning and Newman. The four Gospels are the compositions of four independent men, describing what they saw or heard—differently, but not therefore untruly. Some years ago, in the dead of night, a violent earthquake occurred, such as England had not felt for

many years. Next day a whole sheet of the *Times* was occupied by the different accounts received from different persons. The various ways in which persons roused suddenly from their sleep described the phenomenon, was a curious exemplification of the different manner in which the same event struck different persons, whose accounts of what they had heard or felt were all equally veracious. And it is evident that this sort of evidence is really more valuable than if every body had described the circumstances in exactly the same words. Sometimes in a court of justice, if several persons combine together to give false evidence, the very verbal agreement of their statements will furnish ground for suspicion of collusion, and make their evidence less valuable than if there had been a more natural variety of statement.

Therefore variations in the four Gospels are not to be looked on as proofs of untruthfulness, but the reverse.

There is a human element, as well as a divine, in every part of the Bible. Inspiration does not supersede the intellect or habits of thought of the particular writers, but only helps them. There are indeed many things contained in Holy Scripture which the writers

could not have learned except from direct information of the Spirit. The prophecies in the Old Testament—the wonderful delineation beforehand of the person, the character and office of the Messiah, the destinies of GOD'S people, and of His kingdom—no one could have conceived or written these things unless the Spirit of Truth had put them into his mind by direct revelation. So again there are many doctrines of the New Testament, the Incarnation, the Atonement, our LORD'S Mediation and Intercession, the doctrine of the Sacraments—all these must have been dictated by the HOLY GHOST. But in many parts of Scripture the writers delivered simply in their own language what had come to their knowledge—whether as eye-witnesses or by other ordinary sources of information. Only, as inspired writers, they were kept from error in their writings by the Divine Spirit; for if what they wrote was false or erroneous, it could not be inspired, and we have seen that every part of Scripture is inspired.

We may therefore firmly believe every fact recorded in Holy Scripture by the writers either of the Old or New Testament, as undoubtedly and entirely true. The fact that St. Paul left his cloak with Carpus at Troas,

and many other equally minute particulars, should be received as true, though they seem to be matters of very small importance. There are persons who say that they accept the great facts and doctrines of Revelation, but do not think it necessary to believe all the minute details. But it will generally be observed, that those persons who affect to think lightly of the details of the Bible, do so in reality only to obtain the means of disparaging the great and essential doctrines—the Atonement —or the eternal Judgment—or the Miracles. If we reject the smallest part, we reject the authority on which the greatest is based. And this is well understood by the unbelievers of the present day. Once get in the thin end of the wedge by assuming the inaccuracy of some little circumstance, and the whole authority of GOD'S Word will speedily be shaken, in the minds at least of those who are so unwary as to suffer themselves to be deceived.

Important use has been made of these minute circumstances by some of our most able writers, such as Paley and Blunt, who, on the hypothesis of their correctness which has always been received by the Church, have built up a most convincing and impregnable argument of the truth of Revelation. The coincidence of

times and places, and minute facts, which occur in the Epistles of St. Paul, when compared with the account given of the great Apostle's movements, in the Acts of the Apostles, is most valuable for the conviction of critical and argumentative minds, as to the reality both of the history and the correspondence. Wantonly and carelessly to give up the truth of the details of St. Paul's actions and statements, would be to sacrifice what to some minds has proved one of the surest evidences of Revelation. The coincidences and the verisimilitude of the facts form a mass of circumstantial evidence of much the same character as that by which our courts of law decide the most important questions of life and property. We may not admire too much of "Old Bailey Theology," as it has been termed, in which the Apostles are tried once a week for perjury. But such a book as Bishop Sherlock's "Trial of the Witnesses," is not without its important use in convincing minds accustomed to weigh evidence. I think, therefore, that for Christians to admit for a moment that any facts plainly stated by the writers of Holy Scripture, and not suspected to be interpolated, are unimportant, and possibly not true, simply because they are minute, is not

only a most illogical proceeding, but also a gratuitous giving up of an important position. I would myself take an entirely different ground, and maintain, that even apparently erroneous or contradictory statements, must in reality be true, if we rightly understood them, because they are contained in GOD'S inspired Word.

There is an objection taken by controversialists, which is plausible, yet fallacious. Something like this is the form of it. Do you, say they, believe a verbal inspiration or not? If you say you do not, it is answered, Oh, then you admit that there may be errors. If you say you do, What, it is answered, do you really believe that all the uncouth, even ungrammatical expressions which we find in the Bible can be the Word of GOD? Are all the insignificant details which we find really GOD'S Word? Was it GOD Who spake by St. Paul, when he desired Timothy to send him his cloak from Troas? But this is not an honest argument, in fact, it is mere clap-trap. The simple answer is, that GOD did not dictate to the Apostles things which they could very well learn from their own information, but only kept them from error. Many things were no doubt communicated to them directly, but many things were learned by them in the

same way in which other people become acquainted with facts, and were related by them in their own words, such as they were accustomed to use: only they were preserved from error by the HOLY SPIRIT; else it would not be true that all Scripture is inspired. For what is inspired cannot, by the force of terms, be false. This at once silences all cavils about the Divine and human element, and shows that, while both are present, both are equally true. And it is very remarkable that the HOLY SPIRIT does not supplement the imperfect knowledge of the inspired writers, where exact information is of no importance. Thus, in the account of the marriage at Cana in Galilee it is said, that there were "six waterpots containing two *or* three firkins apiece." Whether it were two or three is unimportant. So St. Paul says, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, "I baptized also the household of Stephanas, besides I know not whether I baptized any other." If St. Paul had been disposed to deny that he had baptized any other, when he really had done so, we may believe that he would have been corrected. But when he said with perfect truth and sincerity that he had forgotten, it was not necessary that he should be reminded of the exact truth. Under this head we may

rank the frequent use of round numbers, as, for instance, when on one occasion four thousand and on another occasion five thousand were fed with the loaves miraculously increased[1]. I do not know that it is necessary for the truth of Scripture to suppose that these were the exact numbers, neither more nor less; though of course it might have been so. In some cases there is greater precision, as in declaring the number of fish that were taken to have been an hundred and fifty and three, or that the number of souls saved from shipwreck with St. Paul were two hundred threescore and sixteen. In these cases the writer knew the exact numbers, and therefore gave them.

This theory of inspiration does not at all militate against the right or duty of criticism. On the contrary, we believe that fair criticism will be found to confirm the truth. I should not say that it interfered in the least with the absolute truth of Scripture, if it were found that Moses compiled his history or parts of it from more ancient documents, as Hume did his history of England from the old chroniclers, or that the Pentateuch was revised by Ezra, and notes added here and there. Then it is always open to debate what is Scripture

[1] St. Mark viii. 19.

and what is not Scripture. If a critical discussion disproves the genuineness of any text, it does not prove that the Bible is not inspired, it only shows that the particular passage is not a part of Scripture, but an interpolation. Again, *of course* there are what seem to be discrepancies between Holy Scripture and science. Until we have, as I said before, a perfect critical knowledge of Scripture, and a thorough understanding of all sciences, which can never be, they must seem to differ, though we may be sure they do not really. Who now is troubled by the old objection about the sun standing still in the valley of Ajalon being contrary to science? I have not the smallest doubt that the first chapter of Genesis will be found to be entirely in accordance with the phenomena of Nature when we understand more, if we ever do understand more, of the science of cosmogony.

In the present letter, I have endeavoured to show that all Scripture is "GOD-inspired," and therefore of necessity true. But I admit with St. Augustine, that in the copies of the Bible which we have in our hands, there are mistranslations, probably interpolations,—and as St. Peter says, things hard to be understood, things which appear marvellous, inconsistent, sometimes even contradictory. In making these

admissions, I would not have it to be inferred that the difficulties or apparent contradictions of Holy Scripture are so numerous or so important as to obscure the general sense. On the contrary, the grand object of Holy Scripture, its truth as a law of life, and a means of attaining heaven, are plain and undeniable to every honest mind. But nevertheless there are difficulties which, exaggerated, have raised a formidable prejudice against the Bible—and on these it is my purpose to enlarge in several succeeding letters.

LETTER VIII.

HOW THE WORD OF GOD IS CONTAINED IN THE BIBLE.

THE first objection to be considered is a notion never before heard of in the Church; against which it is necessary for all true Churchmen to protest with all their might,—the notion that the Word of GOD is not, as has always been believed, co-extensive with the Bible, but that it is *contained in the Bible.*

If it were said that the Word of GOD is contained in the Bible, so that the Bible is *all of it* the written Word of GOD, the proposition is true. And that, no doubt, is the meaning of the words of our sixth Article: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation . . . in the name of Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church." But if it be meant, as it seems to be by some, that the Holy Scripture contains the Word of GOD, and a great deal more which is not the Word of GOD,

I venture to say that this notion is contrary to the belief of Christians of all ages, and is in truth a grievous heterodoxy. Each deacon, before he can obtain ordination, is specially asked, "Do you unfeignedly believe *all* the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments?" and answers, "I do believe them." How can any one make this answer in good faith, if he only believes that part of the Bible is GOD'S Word, and that the rest is merely the uninspired word of man, and may be true or may be false? Again, how is any minister to "instruct the people out of GOD'S Word," as he promises to do, if he does not know where to find it? For if part of the Bible only is the Word of GOD, and part not, it is impossible to know with certainty that we are teaching the truth. The Socinian will leave out those parts of Scripture which make against his view, and declare, that however true may be those parts of Scripture which are the Word of GOD, he does not admit that these passages are so. Each sect will thus eliminate some part or another, until, like the picture in the fable, no part of the Bible will be left. One will discard miracles, another prophecy, another history, another doctrine, until we have no Bible at all.

The present controversy seems to hang mainly on this point—whether we are to accept all the Bible as true or not. There are some persons indeed who deny the inspiration of any part of Scripture. These are simple unbelievers. Others admit that part is inspired, and maintain that other parts are not. Those parts which agree with their own preconceived opinion they accept as inspired—those parts which clash with their own views they reject. They claim "a verifying faculty" as to the truth of the various parts of the Bible. The Church Universal has always maintained that all Scripture is inspired by GOD, and that the Bible and the Word of GOD are synonymous. Whence has arisen the strange temptation to depreciate the inspiration of that book which the Church Universal has always received as true?

There is, of course, always existing in the world a certain amount of infidelity, sometimes dormant, sometimes rampant. When unbelief is rampant it does not follow that it is more general than when it is dormant. During a great part of the last century there was a large amount of dormant unbelief. Political events caused it to become rampant, and it culminated in the French Revolution.

In the present age there is a general spirit of resistance to authority of all kinds, which it is to be feared will grow up into some serious evil. Some, not ill-intentioned men, little think of the wide-spread influence for mischief which their cavils and lax opinions cause; while the evil descends to the lowest depths of society.

One principal cause of the present prevalence of the spirit of unbelief is the influence of imperfect science upon ill-regulated minds. Minds disinclined to bow themselves to the doctrine of the Crucified, catch at the supposed difficulties of science as an excuse for their unbelief, and others are so weak as to be influenced by them.

But there is another cause which is specially to be noted. We cannot doubt that amongst the recent impugners of the Bible there are some earnest though mistaken men. Their heterodoxy results rather from weakness of character than from an evil heart. It is rather want of firm faith, than conscious unbelief; they lack the firmness of character to stand to the truth. It is very difficult to analyze their motives and springs of action. There is a vague, misty, unwholesome, faithless spirit of liberalism in some, in others a sort of vanity

and presumptuousness of intellect. There is also a not quite honest feeling in some men lacking a sound faith, that the newly invented sciences, as philology, ethnology, anthropology, and the like, will perhaps prove some parts of the Bible to be untrue, and therefore that it is wise to anticipate the attack, and say, Well, what of it? we never said it was all true.

The case of these half and half believers—the inventors of the figment that the Word of God is not the Bible, but only *in* the Bible, is this. They are mixed up a good deal with the literary and scientific world, they hear men of cleverness and scientific knowledge, or it may be even an unlettered Zulu, raise objections against the Bible which they cannot answer: they have a sort of unwarrantable notion that they ought to be able to answer all questions—and have not acquired the wisdom to know that the greatest knowledge is sometimes to confess ignorance. These men feel that if the Bible is not true they are dishonest in continuing to hold office in the Church. Therefore they are tempted to adopt the half and half doctrine, that part of the Bible is true and part is not; they will give up the facts or doctrines, and retain the morality. They know,

one will hope, the influence of religion, perhaps in their own lives, at least in the civilized world. But their faith is not strong enough to resist the cavils of clever unbelievers, whose society they are so foolish as to affect, and therefore they adopt the position which we have described. They hope to retain their position, and at the same time the continued approval of their conscience, by fancying that they can form a Church of the nineteenth century, and a nineteenth century Bible, not on the principle of all men interpreting it for themselves, which is the old Dissenting view, but on the principle of all persons accepting as much or as little of it as they please. We may believe without absurdity that there really are conscientious, and in their way clever men, who think that the Church and the Bible may be thus let down easily, so to speak, without a crash. Others, and I confess I am one, believe that this accommodation of the Bible to the vain scepticism of the world is a suicidal measure—one which must result in the most tremendous evil. I hold most firmly that what the Bible was believed to be eighteen hundred years ago, and has been believed for eighteen hundred years, it still continues, that all and every part of Scripture is inspired by GOD;

and that if we give it up we are acting faithlessly and fatally.

I shall proceed to show how few objections there are which may not be removed, and how those which cannot be removed are to be met.

LETTER IX.

DIFFICULTIES.

THERE seems to be a sort of tacit impression amongst some people that difficulties in the Bible are in some way or other an objection to it—that if things can be pointed out which we do not understand—circumstances or events which puzzle us to account for—they are a disparagement of the truth of Holy Scripture, and tend to impair our reliance on it. Perhaps the feeling has arisen from the high opinion which men have come to entertain of their own ability, and the notion that all things can be brought to the level of their own understanding. And yet one would have thought that modern science, if it has taught us nothing else, would have sufficed to convince men of the infinity of the objects of investigation and the utter inability of the human mind to grasp the wonders of even the natural world—how much more of the world of spirits. If the objects of the material universe are beyond the grasp of the human

intellect—if the immensity of the starry system confounds us by its unapproachable magnitude—if even animal life, which is every where around us, eludes our observation by its minuteness, how much more beyond the scope of human intellect must be the spiritual intelligence and moral influences which pervade the universe! Instead, therefore, of difficulties in Scripture being a stumbling-block to either the most illiterate or the most scientific and intellectual, the argument would be all the contrary way. If, as I think I have before observed, all were quite clear and intelligible in the Bible, it might be argued that it was the work of human invention. The difficulties which are found are just what might be expected in a communication from the Maker and Ruler of the universe with the creatures of His hand.

There are several apparent, but no real drawbacks to the absolute truth of every statement in Holy Scripture. One is corruption of manuscripts, another, error in translation or transcription, a third, interpolation, whether casual or wilful.

Two objections are alleged against this view. First it is said, if manuscripts are so corrupt, translations so imperfect, and the text itself so hard to be understood, it is of no great use to

us, that the Scriptures, as originally written, were perfectly true, because on account of their actual obscurity or difficulty we cannot make them our rule and standard.

But first, as I have said, the difficulties of Holy Scripture arising from the above causes are by no means so great or considerable as to obscure the general clearness of the doctrines and precepts delivered. We have a very intelligible account of God's dealings with His people. His commands are clearly set forth, as well as the great truths which He has taught, notwithstanding the difficulties which we may occasionally meet with. And we have in the teaching of the Church a definite system of doctrine and worship concurrent with Holy Scripture, though in a great measure independent of it. The two mutually aid and illustrate and confirm each other, and furnish us with a rule of life which he who runs may read.

The second objection is to this effect—that if, as St. Augustine teaches, we believe that Holy Scripture as originally delivered was all true, and yet in our present Bible we have false renderings, corruptions, and even interpolations, it is open to any one to say of any part of our present Bible of which he does not

approve that he does not believe that that particular passage formed part of the original. The fallacy is obvious. If there really are any contradictions, impossibilities, or falsehoods in our present translation of the Bible, they certainly could not have formed part of the original Bible which was given by inspiration of GOD. But it does not follow from this that any things which ignorant or sceptical persons fancy contradictions or impossibilities are therefore really so, and not to be believed. With regard to supposed impossibilities—if, as the objector would perhaps imply, the miracles are to be rejected as impossibilities, then I can only say that I believe him to be wholly mistaken. I believe, as the Church of all ages has believed, though the objector may not believe, that there is no sort of impossibility or even improbability in the miracles recorded in Holy Scripture. On the contrary, that when resting on sufficient testimony, such as that on which the credibility of the Bible rests, any miracle, even the most strange or the most stupendous, is perfectly credible. Therefore it is obvious that before the objector can propose his difficulty, it is necessary for him to establish that there is really something impossible or incredible in the facts which he mentions, else there is no force in his

objection. We must understand whether he considers all miracles incredible, or only the particular miracles which he objects to. If, he considers all miracles incredible, then we have to say in answer that, in company with the best and wisest men of all ages, we do not agree with him—that we have ample proof from history of the actual occurrence of miracles. If, on the other hand, he admits the possibility or truth of some miracles, but denies others on account of their greatness, or strangeness, or inconceivableness, I would point out, that every miracle is equally impossible to any being but GOD. The smallest miracle and the greatest can only be performed by the power of the Divine Ruler of the Universe. The most ordinary miracle of healing which our Lord wrought daily during His ministry, or the most stupendous miracle of the ancient dispensation, requires the same power for its accomplishment. The opening the eyes of a man born blind, causing, by a word, that the retina of the eye, never before used, should at once convey the sight of objects to the brain, is as absolutely impossible to us as to stop the earth in its revolution or inundate it with a Deluge,—one is just as credible as another. But all Christians believe that the Great Being Who constituted Nature's

laws can by the same power modify their working. They believe that the establishment of the truth of His revelation and the salvation of the human race were an undoubtedly sufficient reason for the exercise of the Divine Power in miracles; they see no sort of impossibility or improbability in the matter, and are not at all surprised at reading them in GOD'S Word, and do not for a moment doubt the truth of GOD'S Word, on account of the miracles recorded in it, but rather the reverse; the working of miracles seems to them altogether so likely.

On these grounds I contend that the objections are futile and irrelevant,—not such as to shake the faith of any sensible Christian.

It is really very sad to observe how determined many are to believe or disbelieve just what they choose; how they ignore every thing that is most sacred in order to exalt their own fancies; and, what is sadder still, to see how easily even good men are deluded by the liberalism of the age, and induced to give up one point after another, until the ground is undermined beneath their feet.

It is quite lawful to endeavour, with reverence, to explain the difficulties which occur, but it is unreasonable to suppose that we can elucidate every mystery whether of nature

or revelation. Learned men have disputed whether any race of animals lived before Adam who were able to make flint heads for arrows; who were the sons of GOD and the giants who lived before the flood; where all the water came from which drowned the world; whether the rainbow appeared for the first time after the flood; whether the world before the flood was or was not as populous as it is now; how far civilization had advanced; whether Melchizedek was the same person as Shem; what was the scientific reality respecting Lot's wife. A pious writer of the last century writes, in confirmation of the Deluge, "The beds of shells that are often found on the top of the highest mountains, and the petrified bones and teeth of fishes, which are dug up hundreds of miles from the sea are the clearest evidence in the world that the waters have, some time or other, overflowed the highest parts of the earth. The truth of these matters is not to be contested *now* by any that have the least insight into experimental philosophy." Voltaire, unable to answer this argument about the shells, declared that they were brought to the places where they were found by the crowds of pilgrims from the Holy Land! Are our modern philosophers quite sure that their own favourite discoveries,

which appear to them so wonderful, may not be found as wide of the mark as the argument of old Stackhouse, or the impertinence of Voltaire.

It is abundantly evident that there are countless questions which arise from the perusal of the Bible, and afford legitimate subjects for discussion and speculation, and that the solution of them would be highly interesting, but which very slightly, if at all, affect the credibility of the Bible. The great truths of Revelation—the great doctrines of the Incarnation and Resurrection—the love and reverence which we owe to God—the kindness and truthfulness due to our neighbour; these and many other important truths are not in the least affected by our knowledge, or want of knowledge, of the pre-Adamic or antediluvian world, or the various other matters of interest and research which spring up as we read the pages of the Bible. It is not as if the Bible were a treatise or system of philosophy or religion, every part of which required to be perfectly understood. We do not read it as we should Butler's Analogy, or Newman's Grammar of Assent, and expect to master every particular of the volume. If we could do so, that would be rather an argument against its Divine inspiration, for what man could fully master might have been composed

by man. But it is simply a record of GOD'S dealings with His people from the beginning of time, containing His laws and principles of Government, affording numerous intimations of His Will, and the designs of His Providence, most necessary to be read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested, profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, but not intended to furnish information on subjects of scientific or mere worldly interest. Men of science are perfectly at liberty to advance their peculiar theories, whether of Catastrophism, Uniformitanism, or Evolutionism, only let them accept the great facts of Revelation, that GOD in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, and formed man in His own image.

LETTER X.

DIFFICULTIES (*continued*).

THERE is an important consideration (as it appears to me) which will explain many difficulties and seeming inaccuracies in Holy Scripture, that is, that many things all through the Bible which are stated to have been said by this or that person, *are not the whole* of what such person said, but only part, or the substance of it; strictly true as regards the idiom of language and the impression conveyed, but not to be taken necessarily as the exact words which were uttered. I will begin with a very simple instance, and go on to what appear to me instances of the same theory, though not so obvious.

We read in the eleventh chapter of Genesis that the men who dwelt in the plain of Shinar said one to another, "Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and

a tower whose top may reach to heaven." Now whether the men of Shinar did or did not say precisely these words, I have no doubt whatever that it is a most true account, in quaint and idiomatic language, of what really happened. There are a great many instances in Holy Scripture of thus putting in a few words the substance of what was done or said. As if one thus described the civil war in America: "The Southern States said, We will no more be joined with the Northern; and the Northern States said, Will you not? Then we will try and make you. Then answered the Southern States, Do it if you can." No one would say that this is not strictly and literally true. So to turn to 1 Kings xxii. 4, Ahab said to Jehosaphat, "Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead? And Jehosaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses." These few words may have been the substance of a lengthy negotiation. This mode of speech and the principle involved in it, simple and obvious as it is, apply, I think, to more cases than might be supposed.

Turn we now to the New Testament. Our LORD, during His three years' ministry, was occupied for the most part in preaching to the

people, expounding the doctrine, illustrating the truth which He came to teach. We have four brief narratives, each containing a fragment of what our LORD did and said. The chief heads of His instructions are the Sermon on the Mount, His parables and conversations. But in preaching, as He did day by day, to the people, we can well imagine, nay, rather feel sure, that He repeated these instructions continually, not precisely in the same words, but enforced and illustrated, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another. Hence if we find the same discourse or the same parable or precept recorded by the Evangelists in somewhat different language, we are not to suppose that one or other of them was not perfectly accurate or true. The juster inference would be that they each set down faithfully what our LORD uttered on the same subject on different occasions. Thus a modern preacher might preach the same sermon to different congregations with alterations suited to his different hearers. The Sermon on the Mount, as recorded at considerable length by St. Matthew in chapters v., vi., and vii., may possibly be all that our Lord said on that occasion. In the sixth chapter of St. Luke we find a great deal of the same matter, but with

variations. Are we, then, to suppose that one or other of the Evangelists was inaccurate, and did not set down exactly what our Lord said? No, surely, it is much more reasonable to believe that the two Evangelists have recorded what our LORD said on two several occasions of His preaching to the people.

But some have fancied that they have detected the Evangelists in recording differently what our LORD said on the same occasion. A not unfriendly writer puzzles himself, most unnecessarily as it seems to me, about the different words recorded as having been uttered by our LORD at the institution of the Sacrament of His blessed Body and Blood. St. Mark records our LORD to have said, "This is My Blood of the New Testament which is shed for many." St. Luke's account is that our LORD said, "This cup is the New Testament in My Blood which is shed for you." The writer argues that if our Lord spoke the words attributed to Him by St. Mark, He did not use those recorded by St. Luke. "The Evangelists," he says, "are here at issue as to a *matter of fact.* St. Mark states it as a matter of fact that at a given moment, and at a given place, our LORD spake certain words; St. Luke states it as a fact that at the same moment and

place He spake certain other and quite different words. . . . If any one can show how these apparently different reports can be harmonized he will have done a great deal towards settling a great question."

I confess that to me there seems no difficulty whatever. The fallacy in the mind of the writer is simply the unwarranted assumption that each Evangelist professes to record in a few verses *all* that was done and said on that great occasion. I myself have no doubt that our LORD said both what is stated by St. Mark and also what is stated by St. Luke, and a great deal more besides in the way of reiteration, explanation, and instruction. Let us try to call up before our minds' eye the circumstances of that solemn scene. When our LORD announced "This is My Body," we can well imagine the excitement and wonder which that declaration must have caused—the inquiries which must have ensued, the explanations which may have been called forth, the different statements which our LORD may have made to answer the interrogations of His Apostles. And when the wonder had abated, and the time was come for the first participation in that great mystery, can we not imagine our LORD, after having broken the bread and blessed

the cup, summoning His Apostles to the heavenly feast, and as they received the cup, saying to one it may be, "This is My Blood of the New Testament which is shed for many," and to another, with somewhat different expression, "This Cup is the New Testament in My Blood which was shed for you," and to another simply, "This is My Blood"?

The inscription placed by Pilate on the Cross has appeared to some to involve contradiction. St. Luke says it was, "This is the King of the Jews;" St. Matthew, "This is JESUS the King of the Jews;" St. Mark, "The King of the Jews;" St. John, "JESUS of Nazareth the King of the Jews." But is not all reconciled if it were, "This is JESUS of Nazareth the King of the Jews"? We need not suppose each Evangelist to assert that what he records was *all* that was written. Each one records so far as he knew, and each was kept by the HOLY GHOST from recording any thing false.

It is certain, however, that there are some difficulties of this sort which cannot be explained with our present information. Well, let us hope and believe that the time will come when our present imperfect knowledge will be removed, and we shall know every thing.

The following has always struck me as affording an instance of the manner in which what at first sight may appear a difficulty is satisfactorily accounted for. St. Matthew records (ch. xiv. 19) that five thousand persons were fed with five loaves, and that twelve baskets full of fragments were gathered up. St. Mark (ch. viii. 6) says that there were four thousand persons, seven loaves, and seven baskets full of fragments. If this were all that was recorded a person disposed to cavil might say, "Here is a clear discrepancy; one Evangelist says five thousand, another four—one says twelve baskets of fragments, another only seven." But the matter is explained by the words of our LORD, "O ye of little faith, do ye not yet understand neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up, *neither* the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand?"

It is not denied that there are apparent contradictions—but they would surely be explained if we knew the circumstances. As Dean Alford says at page 3 of his introduction, "The two, three, or four Gospel records of the same event are each of them separately true, written by men guided into all truth, and re-

lating facts which happened as they happened. If we could now see the whole details of the event, we should see that each narrative is true. But not seeing the whole details of the event, and having only these two, three, or four independent accounts, we must be prepared to find that they appear to be discrepant one from the other." One day he thinks we shall be able to reconcile discrepancies.

LETTER XI.

DIFFICULTIES (*continued*).

THE life of Judas Iscariot will illustrate the supposed contradictions which occur in the Bible, and the small importance of them. I do not mean that it is not important to clear up contradictions and explain difficulties, but simply that if we are unable to do so it is merely a proof of our own ignorance.

There are several opinions as to the motives of Judas's treachery. Some have imagined him not to have been so desperately wicked as is generally supposed. Ambition, rather than covetousness, is thought to have been his fault. They suppose that Judas, in common with the rest of the Apostles, had formed ambitious projects in consequence of their connexion with our LORD. They saw in Him one endowed with supernatural power, which would enable Him to become, in a literal sense, the King of Israel; and they hoped that, when He had established His kingdom, they should

be sharers in His wealth and honours. Judas resolved to precipitate events, and force JESUS to declare Himself—not for a moment supposing that He would suffer Himself to be put to death. But it was not the purpose of our Lord to escape. He had come to die for the sins of man, and, bitter as the cup might be, He had resolved to drink it, and yield Himself to death. Judas, seeing his ambitious designs frustrated, in a fit of desperation and remorse departed and hanged himself.

Such is the view of some persons. I confess I do not sympathize with this notion, but prefer the commonly-received opinion that it was simply sordid covetousness which led to the sinful act of Judas. He held the bag, we read, and was a thief. This was before his crowning act of treachery. The funds collected, either from their own stores or from the contributions of the disciples generally, for the maintenance of JESUS and the twelve, as they went about from place to place, were entrusted to his care, and it may be that he pilfered from time to time such sums as he thought would not be missed. Having conceived the desire of purchasing a piece of land called the "Potter's Field" (one perhaps with which he was familiar), he

was anxious to make up the necessary sum. Hence his displeasure that the three hundred pence spent on the alabaster box of ointment had not been put into the bag, in order that he might have secured a portion of it. Perhaps he calculated that the field would be a good speculation, and that he should be able to replace the sum purloined, as dishonest trustees have often done. At last, possibly, the opportunity of making the purchase was likely to pass by, or his covetous desire became so inordinate that he resolved on the guilty measure of selling his good and kind Master in order to make up the sum which he needed, and so was guilty of an act for which his name has been execrated throughout after generations.

There are several particulars mentioned, which, at first sight, may appear contradictory, but which are not so necessarily. It is said by St. Luke, that he purchased a field with the reward of his iniquity. St. Matthew relates that he brought the thirty pieces of silver back to the chief priests and elders, and cast them down in the temple. But we know that in these days, and why not also in those of which we are speaking? a man may be said to have bought a thing before he had actually paid the money. A man buys a field when he and the

seller have signed the agreement. The money may not be paid, perhaps, for some time afterwards. Again, it is said by St. Luke that Judas purchased the field, whereas St. Matthew says that the chief priests took the thirty pieces of silver, and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood: and they took counsel and bought the potter's field to bury strangers in." Very probably they completed the purchase which Judas had agreed on. Again, it is recorded by St. Matthew, that "he departed and went and hanged himself," whereas St. Luke says that "he purchased a field with the reward of his iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out."

Different explanations have been given of these statements. Some have imagined the agency of evil spirits, who in their wild scorn, may have dashed the unhappy victim violently to the ground. But there is no need of such conception. It is recorded by tradition that he died on that very field, the covetous desire of obtaining which had been the cause of his ruin. We may picture to ourselves the ghastly scene. The potter's field was probably a place where clay used for making pottery

had been dug. The side perhaps was precipitous, and, if disused for some time, had become rough with trees and brushwood. The unhappy man, frenzied and remorseful, rushed from the presence of the scoffing priests, and stopped not till his steps had led him to the spot, every part and corner of which he had often examined with covetous eyes. Here in some tangled nook, where a tree, it may be, stretched its branch over the precipice, he fastened the fatal cord, and hung suspended in the thicket. Perhaps his fate may have been for a while concealed. No one knew whither he had gone; the place was lonely and deserted. His body may have become decomposed and fallen to the ground. And when some stranger happened to wander to the fatal spot, he found the body in the state so graphically described by St. Peter, "burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." And the fact soon became known to the dwellers at Jerusalem, it was bruited abroad and talked of, and the neighbours, shocked by the dreadful event, gave a name to the piece of land, calling it thenceforth Aceldama, or the Field of Blood.

Now though this account of the matter appears to me not improbable, yet what I desire principally to point out is this, that

even if no probable explanation of the supposed contradiction could be given, it would be of little consequence. Persuaded, as we are, of the truth and inspiration of the Bible, our only inference would be, that we had not rightly understood the exact meaning of some part of it. The treachery of Judas, and the general description of the whole affair, would be impressed on our minds in all their fearful reality, though some of the incidents connected with it may not have been exactly apprehended.

LETTER XII.

THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER.

ANOTHER reason why some people have an impression that there are contradictions and inaccuracies in Holy Scripture is, that they do not recognize the fact that the truth must be sought not in the mere letter but in the spirit. Human language is so vague, and the idiom of language so capricious, that the mere literal and logical sense of words is not always their true meaning. When we read that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven," we feel the depth of the truth which is announced, though the letter be difficult to accept. It is supposed, indeed, by some that the "Needle's Eye" was a certain low and narrow gateway at Jerusalem, through which a camel disencumbered of its burden might with difficulty pass, but not otherwise; and that in like manner a rich man disembarrassed of his wealth by almsdeeds, might get to Heaven. This is a beau-

if we cannot reconcile them we must accept them as they are revealed.

Besides the instances already adverted to in which truth is revealed, or set before us, not by the letter but by the spirit of Holy Scripture, there is an immense range of subject in which strong, and even wildly metaphorical language is employed, as when GOD is spoken of as "riding upon the wings of the wind," executing judgment "with a mighty hand and outstretched arm." Large portions of Scripture—a great part of the Psalms and the Prophets—are couched in this sort of language. But it is not always easy to understand what parts are to be taken figuratively and what literally. The parable of Dives and Lazarus is considered by some to be figurative or parabolic in its details, but strictly true in its general sense and the instruction which it conveys. The Song of Solomon is generally thought to be allegorical throughout. Some whom we should not call unbelievers consider the history of the Fall to be an allegory. I do not think there is any certain rule by which to draw the line between metaphor and reality except where the Church has fixed it for us. But the fact of a portion of Scripture being allegorical, or the doubt whether it be so or

not, does not in the least militate against the principle which I am advocating—that all Scripture is true.

LETTER XIII.

INTERPOLATION.

THOUGH all Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, yet it does not appear that GOD has exerted a miraculous providence in the exact preservation of the text. In the early ages of the Church, particularly in the time which elapsed before the Holy Scriptures were gathered together into their present shape, and formally recognized as the Word of GOD, there was probably much laxity of transcription.

Tischendorf, in his introduction to the New Testament, says, "I have no doubt that in the very earliest ages after the Holy Scriptures were written, and before the authority of the Church protected them, wilful alterations and especially additions were made in them." In our own day we know that books, not indeed so sacred as the Bible, but still valuable and important books, as the writings of Bishop Ken and Bishop Taylor, have been tampered with,

and even John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress has been adapted to Catholic requirement.

The most fertile source of alteration of the Bible has probably been interpolation. Interpolation might be made without any dishonesty. In some few cases we might suspect dishonesty, yet without being able to say in what quarter. For instance, in regard to the famous text (1 St. John v. 7) about the three witnesses, which is found for the most part in Latin copies, but not in the Greek, it would be difficult to say whether it was interpolated by the Church party or omitted by the Arians. But it is scarcely to be doubted that in most cases, as possibly in this, the interpolation has arisen from the fact of transcribers inserting in the text what had been written as a marginal note by some pious owner of the manuscript from which the transcription or copy was made. The greater part of ascertained or supposed interpolations are nothing more than marginal notes appended by way of explanation, and then transferred to the text.

There are two important passages in our Authorized Version of the Bible, which are not found in the oldest manuscripts. One is the account of the woman taken in adultery—the other the last eleven verses of St. Mark's Gos-

pel. It is important to observe that there is no supposed interpolation, which, if even it be judged on full examination not to be contained in the genuine Scripture, is not amply compensated by other passages of undoubted genuineness. One would be sorry to think for a moment that the beautiful narrative of our LORD'S condescending kindness to the sinful woman was not certainly genuine, yet even if that were the case, the whole Gospel teems with so many instances of our LORD'S mercy and goodness that no absolute loss would accrue, even if that passage were expunged from the sacred volume.

Take again the last verses of St. Mark containing the words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." The sceptics considered their views strengthened by the discovery that these last words might possibly not be genuine, but surely they forgot the other unquestionable passages in which the same doctrine is contained. They forgot that our LORD said (St. John iii. 13), "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten SON of GOD .... He that believeth on the SON hath everlasting life; and he that

believeth not the SON shall not see life; but the wrath of GOD abideth on him." And again (St. John viii. 24), "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

Now, if in reading Holy Scripture we come upon some passage which seems to us difficult to suppose to be the Word of GOD, apparently contradictory to other passages, it is obviously open to us to consider that we either do not understand it, or else that possibly it may be interpolated. Compared with the vast quantity of matter, of the genuineness of which we have no doubt, such passages are insignificant.

In the second chapter of Genesis there is a passage which to my mind reads like an interpolation. "A river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison, that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon, the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel, that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates." Now there may be some important reason for teaching us

that there was gold, bdellium, and onyx stone in the land of Havilah, but it certainly is not obvious why these particular products of the earth should have been mentioned. In fact the whole account of the four rivers is difficult to understand. The traditionary account of the Garden of Eden is that it was a place of great delight, a garden full of beautiful trees, in which the first parents of our race were placed to dwell in happiness; and we can well picture to ourselves a charming valley such as one often sees in mountainous countries, watered by four rivulets descending from the hills and uniting their convergent streams. This may perhaps be the meaning of the words, "from thence it was parted and became into four heads." But if we are to suppose that four great rivers like the Euphrates took their source from the Garden of Eden, there is great difficulty in understanding it. The source of four great rivers seems to imply heavy rain, snow, glaciers, without which rivers could not have been fed with water. The Garden of Eden must have been placed in some mountain height or water-shed, like the Oberland of Switzerland, or the Himalaya Mountains, if it was the source of four great rivers. There may be some explanation of the difficulty which

I know not of. But I confess that it looks very much as if some ingenious reader of the Bible had added from conjecture the names of the four rivers, and that a second annotator had set down what we read about the bdellium and the onyx stone. On this hypothesis the difficulty about the site of the Garden of Eden, in itself not, so far as we can see, of great importance, vanishes altogether[1]. I am very far indeed from saying that there may not be some recondite meaning in this passage of Scripture: but it quite satisfies my mind to suppose it may possibly be an interpolation.

[1] See the remarks on Deuteronomy ii. 10—12, and 20—23, and iii. 9, in the Speaker's Commentary, Vol. i. 799. The writer says, "It must be remembered that footnotes are an invention of modern times. An ancient historian embodied incidental remarks and references and illustrations in his text: nor would one who at a subsequent period undertook to re-edit an ancient work regard himself as taking an unwarrantable liberty if he added here and there an incidental notice or short explanation in a parenthetic form."

LETTER XIV.

THINGS INCOMPREHENSIBLE—UNITY OF THE FATHER AND THE SON.

THERE are not only difficulties in Holy Scripture, but there are many things which seem incomprehensible.

For instance, the Incarnation—we can understand the proposition that the SON of GOD took the form and nature of man, and that He was perfect GOD and perfect man. But how this union could be is incomprehensible. There are difficulties in it which are beyond the grasp of our intellect. So the Atonement. That the SON of GOD should die to save sinners is intelligible in terms, but I suppose the loftiest human intellect cannot comprehend the idea in its fulness.

It has been too much the practice to suppose that there is an antagonism between Religion and Science. Yet it is not easy to define the precise relation in which Religion stands to Science. One relation between them is thus

referred to in our LORD's conversation with Nicodemus: "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye understand if I tell you of heavenly things?" There is an analogy between our ignorance of the Natural world and our ignorance of the Spiritual world. It is unquestionable that there are many things connected with human science which are hard to believe. In fact there are some things more incredible by far than miracles. Take the following, from Mrs. Somerville's book on "Molecular and Microscopic Science." Every drop of green matter that mantles the pools in summer teems with the most minute and varied forms of animal life. The species called *monas corpusculus* by the distinguished Professor Ehrenberg has been estimated to be one 2000th part of a line in diameter. Of such infusoria a single drop of water may contain 500,000,000 individuals, a number equalling that of the whole human species now existing upon earth. (P. 63.) Most of the infusoria multiply by continuous bisection like the unicellular algæ. The division generally begins with the nucleus, and is longitudinal, according to the form and nature of the animal, and is accomplished with such rapidity that by the computation of Professor Ehrenberg 268,000,000

of individuals might be produced from one single individual of the species paramecium in a month. (P. 74.)

I am not at all disposed to doubt the truthfulness of these statements. It does indeed seem rather difficult to count such enormous numbers. Still, on the authority of such persons as Professor Ehrenberg, Professor Owen (whom Mrs. Somerville quotes) and Mrs. Somerville herself, I am quite ready to believe that such vast numbers of the animalcula may exist as they tell us. Professor Tyndall, in his lecture on the "Scientific Use of Imagination," informs us that the tail of a comet is sometimes 100,000,000 miles in length and 50,000 miles in diameter, and that all this matter if "swept together and suitably compressed" might be carried away by a horse and cart,—nay, he has sometimes thought that the whole material of the sky might be packed up in "a lady's portmanteau." Well, I am sure I cannot contradict him. All I can say is, that it is, in newspaper language, "extraordinary if true," but I am not disposed to contest its truth, and therefore can only consider it as extraordinary.

There are some things quite familiar to us, which if we were first told of them would seem

miraculous, or more than miraculous. If any one told a person before unacquainted with the fact that he might speak with a friend across the Atlantic and get an answer in an hour or two, or that he could have an exact portrait of himself taken by the sun, he would be inclined to doubt. These things are so familiar to us that we think little of them. Many things which scientific men tell us of, are much more difficult to believe than miracles—because in miracles we know the cause which produces the effect; but in many scientific discoveries we see only the effect and are ignorant of the producing cause.

In this respect, therefore, there is a close analogy between religion and science, that in both there are things hard, nay, impossible to be understood.

I am inclined, however, to think that Revelation and Science may often corroborate each other's testimony, and help to illustrate each other's truth. Surely men of science ought to treat the historical facts of Scripture with at least the same deference as they do other facts recorded in ancient books; and perhaps Philology, and Ethnology, and Anthropology would be all the more to be relied on if based on facts recorded in the Scriptures.

In like manner facts discovered by science may help us to illustrate some great Christian Truth. Some analogy of nature will aid us, if not fully to comprehend a revealed truth, yet to realize to a certain extent the possibility of the incomprehensible. Let me give as an instance the doctrine of the Consubstantiality of the FATHER and the SON—that is, as we say in the Nicene Creed, "We believe in one LORD JESUS CHRIST, the only-begotten SON of GOD, begotten of the FATHER before all worlds, GOD of GOD, Light of Light, Very GOD of Very GOD, begotten, not made—being of one substance with the FATHER;" or, as St. Paul says, "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." This difficult doctrine has been explained in some degree by the analogy of the sun in the heavens, GOD the Father being compared to the orb of light which we see in heaven above, GOD the SON, to the bright effulgence or rays which stream from it to the dwellers on the earth; their essence is the same—the one inseparable from the other, and inconceivable without it; essentially contemporaneous yet distinct. The analogy is rendered more forcible by the recent discoveries of science. The sun is not only that mild power which is described in the fable, as persuading

the traveller, by its gentle influence, to cast away his cloak, but it is an intensely operating force, darting forth volumes of heat of incredible magnitude, and by its power not only controlling the motions of the whole system, but entering into the very composition of the smallest particle of animal and vegetable life, giving life and motion, warmth and colour to the smallest leaf or animalcule. This analogy may help many minds to conceive the possibility of the union in one substance of the FATHER and SON. The third person of the Blessed Trinity might in like manner be compared to Light.

LETTER XV.

THINGS INCOMPREHENSIBLE—SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

THE origin of evil is the grand difficulty not of religion only, but of all moral and metaphysical reasoning; and, connected with it, the doctrine of eternal punishment. How sin could ever find entrance into a world which bears such abundant evidence of being the work of a good and wise Creator; why, when it once entered, it was not stamped out and extinguished; still more its fearful result in eternal punishment,—each proposition seems to rise in incomprehensibility above the other. On the first propositions I need not dwell. We see the evidence of sin everywhere—there is no denying it. But the other subject—eternal punishment—is future and undiscernible, and therefore, though it is plainly revealed, it has been by some disputed.

Let me endeavour to treat the subject in terms used by human philosophy. Philo-

sophers assert, probably with truth, that nothing which exists can absolutely perish: not an atom of this material world can ever cease to exist. What seems to die and be decomposed is reproduced in other combinations. The leaves which strew the ground in autumn, and seem to perish, do in fact fertilize the earth and spring up again in other forms. Animal matter is the food of vegetable life. The very smoke which rises from the combustion of matter is subtilized but for a time, and not destroyed. Except by a miracle, no single particle of matter could be annihilated.

Again, the forces of nature are believed to be indestructible. When the lightning rends the sky, and, flashing for a moment, seems extinct, it is but the electric fluid passing from one cloud to another, or into the bosom of the earth. Motion passes into heat, and heat into motion. If a substance is made red-hot and suffered to cool, the heat is not annihilated, but passes into the circumambient air.

Mr Buckle says, "The grand conception which is now placing the indestructibility of force on the same ground as the indestructibility of matter, has an importance far above its scientific value, considerable as that undoubtedly is. For, teaching us that nothing perishes,

but that on the contrary the slightest movement of the smallest body in the remotest region produces results which are perpetual, which diffuse themselves through all space, and which, though they may be metamorphosed, cannot be destroyed, it impresses us with such an exalted idea of the regular and compulsory march of physical affairs as must eventually influence other and higher departments of inquiry..... When, therefore, the modern doctrine of the conservation of force becomes firmly coupled with the older doctrine of the conservation of matter, we may rest assured that the human mind will not stop there, but will extend to the study of man inferences analogous to those already admitted in the study of nature."

We may accept the theory and apply it to the question before us. We may believe that the soul of man is indestructible; the thoughts and actions of men do not perish, but remain imprinted, as it were, on the soul. Professor Holmes says, very beautifully, that "Memory is a material record, and is written all over, like the rock of the Sinaitic valley with inscriptions left by the caravans of thought as they have passed year by year through its mysterious recesses." How continually does memory bring back to the mind the remem-

brance of incidents long past and gone: the most trivial things sometimes start up before us: things which we have not thought of for years come back vividly, and almost startle us like phantoms of the past. Some sight, or sound, or word brings back a long train of incidents and feelings which we had supposed to have been long forgotten. But they have not perished; they are laid up in the treasury of the mind. It is probable that at the last day all the actions of our life will stand out before us in a long array, as if they had been done but yesterday. Each act of cruelty, or lust, or fraud, each resistance of conscience, each rash, presumptuous deed, the clever article which won the applause of a sceptical clique, but sapped the faith, and ruined the soul of some weak-minded brother, all will rise up before the mind's eye.

Perhaps the ordinary incidents of daily life appear to us too trivial to be treasured up for ever. But there is another way in which they survive. Common every-day actions, or even thoughts, become fixed as habits. Habits are, so to speak, an accumulation of small unaccounted actions. Selfish acts of slothfulness, self-indulgence, ill-temper, or again of kindness, gentleness, zealous exertion—

things which cannot be remembered, much less counted, still remain in the form of habits, and really form the substance of our life. Habits more than any thing make each man what he is; and thus, though the particular actions which went to form the habit may have been so minute as to be scarcely cognizable by the memory; yet they still exist and form the substance of the soul and body—even as the hardest rocks are formed of the minutest atoms.

These are awful thoughts, yet strictly according to the analogy of nature. If, as we have seen, not a particle of matter is annihilated, if the forces of nature remain the same, so also may we argue, and experience seems to teach us the same, do the habits, thoughts, and actions of our lives—yea, the very substance of our souls and bodies. As St. John says in the book of Revelation, "The time is at hand: he that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still,"—and that to all eternity!

Now have we not by a process of philosophical reasoning, apart from the authority of Holy Scripture, worked out the tremendous problem of "the worm that dieth not, and the

fire which is not quenched"? We have an indestructible soul gifted with an eternal existence, yet eaten up with vile affections, "unjust, unholy, filthy," unable to rid itself of its filth and unholiness, tormented by excruciating remorse, cursing its own folly and madness, longing for annihilation, yet unable to attain it any more than the materials of the earth, or the forces of Nature can be annihilated—lasting on from age to age. What is then to change its state or destiny? Nothing. The notion is that all things last for ever, unless GOD wills it otherwise. GOD might annihilate the world, so He might annihilate our sin. But will He do so? Yes. He has given His sacred promise that our sins may be blotted out by the Blood of CHRIST. There is a time when all may be changed by an act of mercy and omnipotence—all may be atoned for if we will accept GOD'S mercy. Before the solemn judgment there is a remedy, but not after. GOD once called us to repentance. What could not have been done by other means, GOD sending His beloved SON in the flesh would have blotted out our iniquities, and made us pure and holy, if we would have accepted His forgiveness.

Of all instances of madness and folly, the

greatest perhaps is the madness and folly of those who disbelieve the existence of Hell, because it seems contrary to the notions which they, poor creatures! have formed of GOD'S attributes—as if we, with our present faculties, could comprehend the attributes of GOD, and weigh His mercy against His justice. And the argument is a fallacy after all. GOD, say some, is too merciful to punish sinners eternally. He will rather annihilate them. That assumes that there is a merciful and Almighty GOD. But that very GOD has distinctly told us that unrepentant sinners are doomed to eternal misery. You see the dilemna. Either there is an Almighty GOD, or there is not. If there is, as we verily believe, we have His own word, and He cannot lie, that unrepentant sinners will suffer eternally—if there is not, then by the very law of nature, our sins and their consequences will cleave to us for ever.

LETTER XVI.

MYSTERY IN REVELATION AND SCIENCE.

GREAT mystery hangs over the life of man. The Book of Job, full of marvellous philosophy, illustrates our incapacity to fathom the depths of GOD'S Providence, by our ignorance with regard to the ordinary course of nature. Elihu describes in eloquent language some of the ordinary operations of nature which elude our power of observation. "Behold," said he, "GOD is great, and we know Him not. . . . . Great things doeth He which we cannot comprehend. . . . . Out of the south cometh the whirlwind, and cold out of the north; by the breath of GOD frost is given and the breadth of the waters is straitened. . . . . Hearken unto this, O Job, and consider the wondrous works of GOD. Dost *thou* know the balancing of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him that is perfect in knowledge? How thy garments are warm, when He guideth the earth by the south wind? Hast thou with Him spread out the

sky, which is as a molten looking-glass? The ways of the Almighty are past finding out. He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in justice. Let men therefore fear Him."

Possibly some will say that though these operations of nature were unknown to men in the days of Job, yet in the present day we are well acquainted with them. I do not think that a man of real science would make such an assertion. He would be well aware that every discovery made in the secrets of Nature only opens a new path to future inquiry, which seems ever lengthening as we advance. There is not a branch of science which is explored in half its bearings. We may boast indeed with justice that science has made great progress in our days, and that our acquirements in many departments are far beyond those of our fathers; still it is only in comparison with them that we have any right to boast. If we compare our attainments with the things which yet remain unknown, they sink into insignificance.

In spite therefore of the march of modern science, the argument of this portion of the book of Job is still forcibly applicable. We may still appeal to the ablest man of modern science as to the simple patriarch of the earliest ages: knowest thou the ordinances of creation?

canst thou tell the number of the worlds which GOD hath made? dost thou know their balancings? canst thou tell whence the bright comet travelleth, and what is its nature? whence cometh the earthquake? Canst thou unfold the history of those mighty reptiles which once peopled this earth? What power was it that flung them, like the fabled Titans of old, under the rocks and mountains which now form their bed? Canst thou explain whence come the storm and the tempest, and the drought or long-continued rain? Canst thou explain the disease which destroys our cattle, or the subtle cholera—the pestilence which walketh in the darkness, or the sickness that destroyeth in the noonday. Modern science with all its cleverness is unable to unravel these mysteries of nature,—it may ponder over, but cannot answer these questions. And if it could, there are other questions far more difficult which would spring up to baffle it.

And if it is unable to explain mere earthly things, how can it understand spiritual things, as the life of the soul of man—its origin, its destiny?

Yes, if man's unassisted reason finds countless difficulties in the system of the visible universe, how much more of mystery might he

expect would meet him in the invisible and spiritual—the nature of GOD, and of the holy angels; the angels of darkness; man, his complex nature, his double character, his intellectual greatness yet moral depravity; the spiritual influences which bear upon his condition, and affect his final destiny. Who can explain these mysteries? None but those who derive their knowledge from the Word of GOD. Much, very much, is there explained to us—as much probably as is good for us to know, or as we are competent to understand.

It is obvious that man has many noble and excellent gifts far superior to any other creature which we see on earth, in fact, of an entirely distinct nature. But then there are marks upon him of a different character, traces of degradation and corruption. How do we account for these inconsistencies? How do we explain the fact that notwithstanding his high powers, both moral and intellectual, he is so often debased by sin and degraded by passion, —that knowing what is good, he so often chooses what is evil? What philosophy can explain this mystery? None. It has perplexed the wisest men of old. Even now no science or human learning which is not based on revelation can explain the strange pheno-

menon. But the mystery is explained in the pages of Holy Scripture. In these we read of man's transgression and his fall. We see the natural and threatened consequences of sin and unbelief—the dreadful mystery is unfolded to our understanding. We read the plain historical narrative which teaches us that man was placed in this world in a state of trial, endowed with noble and divine qualities, but also gifted with the power of choice between good and evil,—and in an evil hour he fell, and his nature became debased, but not irremediably. Though still endowed with the gift of reason, his will and inclination have become corrupt—disposed to evil rather than to good. Hence the strange and anomalous mixture of good and evil which has perplexed the philosophers of the world, but which is accounted for, and could be accounted for, only by the revelation which GOD has made to man.

But there is another even more important mystery which the Book of life, and no science reveals, that is the *destiny* of man. Science can teach us much respecting the revolution of the planets, and the geological formation of the earth, and the forces of the universe, and other wonderful matters which its increasing knowledge can attain,—

and from the discoveries of science, art can devise beautiful things for the use and embellishment of this life. But science is utterly unable to carry us one step beyond the grave, —all its skill is confined to this world's narrow horizon, all beyond is a mystery so far as science is concerned. GOD'S revealed Word alone can assure us of the world hereafter, exhibiting to us CHRIST the first-fruits of the resurrection, and assuring us that we also shall rise again.

Yet more—much more than this—GOD'S Word explains to us the greatest of all the mysteries of our existence, that is, how we may repair the ravages of our corruption, how our nature may be regenerated and restored, how each one may become pure and holy, and fitted for the realms of glory. Show me the science that can teach us this, and I would acknowledge its high value. But while science is unable to furnish us with the smallest clue to solve the mystery of mysteries, he who clings to his Bible understands it all—all that is necessary or his welfare through eternity.

LETTER XVII.

MIRACLES—THE STRANGENESS OF SOME MIRACLES.

A GREAT deal is said in the present day about miracles. One man will tell you he cannot believe them. You ask him why? Because they are incredible. You point out to him that so far from being incredible, they *have been* almost universally believed. All nations, civilized and uncivilized, have believed them. GOD'S people in ancient times believed them. The whole civilized world for the last eighteen hundred years has believed the miraculous birth, the resurrection and ascension of our LORD, and the other miraculous works which He wrought during His ministry. But, says the sceptic, we men of science know better, and cannot believe. But why? I ask again. Because, he answers, all things go on in a natural order according to fixed laws, from which there is no deviation. But I reply, that is the very thing we are discussing. To say that there can be no miracles, because all

things go on according to fixed laws is simply begging the question. It is to say a thing is because it is. We, on the other hand, believe in miracles, first, because we have no doubt that He Who constituted the order of nature can modify it at His pleasure, which is self-evident; secondly, because we have abundant, nay overwhelming evidence from history that He really has done so. Hundreds and thousands of people flocked together for the very purpose of seeing and profiting by the miracles of JESUS. The truth of the fact is recorded by testimony which cannot be shaken.

Besides the philosophic unbeliever, there exist in the present day a number of well-meaning, but half-hearted, dubious, vacillating persons, who retain a sort of general belief in the truth of the Bible, but are apt to be tossed about by every wind of doctrine and scared by every symptom of danger. These men are staggered in their belief by the Scripture account of the universal Deluge, because forsooth they cannot imagine where all the water could have come from; they are in terrible alarm when half a human skull is found in a gravel-pit, or some fragments of flint which they set down as arrow-heads fabricated by

some pre-Adamic race. One day the discovery of a Negro head in some Egyptian or Babylonian painting makes them doubt the descent of all mankind from one common race; the next day the assertion that not man only, but all animals and vegetables, have been developed from a primordial organization, seems worthy to be set in comparison with the account which GOD Himself has given us of the creation of all things. In short their faith is so weak and unstable that it is shaken by every new fact or conjecture which men of science, or of no science, bring forward.

It is the same sort of intellect which, if it does not deny the possibility of miracles, yet endeavours to minimize the amount of miracles, as if they were not to be expected, when a fact could by possibility be otherwise accounted for; or as if the requirement of a miracle to account for any revealed fact were an argument against its credibility; or as if it were not likely that GOD should accredit His revelation by miracles. They do not absolutely deny that GOD sent His only-begotten SON into the world to be born of a pure Virgin, yet they think it strange that He should lead the Wise Men by a star to the place where the young Child lay, and endeavour to account for

the phenomenon by any other way than by a miracle.

For some time the account of the sun standing still at the slaughter of Bethoron alarmed these timid persons. It was suggested by some ingenious writer, who did not like to disbelieve it altogether, that possibly all that Joshua or Jasher meant might have been, that, in consequence of the great quantity of hail which fell, the daylight may have lasted half an hour longer than it otherwise would have done. Whether this sagacious conjecture afforded them any satisfaction I cannot say. I should think not. At present, I believe, persons agree in taking the statement of the inspired writer to mean, not that the sun stood still, but that the earth stopped in its diurnal revolution. Every body now admits that Joshua adopted the common language of the day, still employed amongst ourselves, when we say that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. But now comes in another difficulty to puzzle the semi-scientific mind. If the earth stopped suddenly in its revolution, there would be such a tremendous shock that all sorts of strange things would have happened. The victorious Israelites and the vanquished Canaanites alike must have been flung violently to the ground, and it is

well if the waters of the Dead Sea were not thrown out of their basin, so as to drown both conqueror and conquered.

As there really are persons, I believe, with whom objections of this sort have weight, I desire to suggest the following Canon: If GOD willed to work a miracle, He would of necessity provide for all the contingencies which might arise out of it. If He willed to prolong the length of the day so that His people might gain a more complete victory, and in a manner which might convince both them and all after ages of His power and might, He would surely take care that the objects of His favour were neither dashed to pieces nor drowned in consequence of it.

And there is another point to which sufficient attention has not been drawn, namely, that the Almighty Ruler did often, when it was His will to work miracles, choose designedly some of the most strange and striking modes of effecting His object, for the very purpose of showing that they were really miracles, with the intent of convincing those who witnessed them, and those to whom they should be related in after times, that the power of GOD was really exercised, and His honour vindicated.

Turn, for example, to the fourteenth chapter

of Exodus. It is evident that if the Almighty had so willed He might have led His people Israel round by the north side of the Red Sea, without causing them to pass through it. But He did just the contrary for the very purpose of working an evident miracle. He caused them to encamp at Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, so that Pharaoh might suppose that they were "entangled in the land," and could not escape him—which, in truth, they could not have done, unless the sea had been divided for their passage. It was GOD'S purpose to save His people in such a manner that both they themselves, and the Egyptians, and the nations round about, and all after generations, might know and understand that it was not by any strength or skill of man, but that GOD Himself had delivered His people, "by a mighty hand and outstretched arm," that all men might know that it was the salvation of the LORD.

This marvellous incident—the object of which is clearly told in Holy Scripture—is, we cannot doubt, an example or type of many other subsequent events,—the extraordinary preservation of so considerable a number of people in the wilderness, the water made to gush from the stony rock, the falling of the walls of Jericho,

the sun standing still,—all was done in order to prove by the marvels shown that the hand of GOD was there[1].

The same principle runs through many other of the miracles. Take, for instance, the history of Jonah. When GOD determined to bring back His rebellious prophet, and force him to do His will, we read that GOD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Some of the persons of whom I have before spoken are offended at the strangeness of the miracle—it seems to them almost too strange to be true. But surely the right view of the miracle is that GOD purposely chose it on the very account of its strangeness. Suppose, instead of preparing a great fish, GOD had prepared some broken spar of a vessel, or a hencoop, on which the prophet might have floated to the shore, then, of course, the sceptic would have said—Oh, there was no miracle here—it was only what might have happened to any shipwrecked mariner. But now the strangeness of the miracle was designed to prove to the prophet, and to us who read the narrative, authenticated as it is by our blessed

[1] See also Numbers xvi. 30: "If the Lord make a *new* thing, and the earth open her mouth," &c.

LORD Himself, that GOD's hand had been really exerted.

The miracle of the ass speaking to Balaam is of the same character—chosen purposely for its strangeness. And so no doubt the great miracle of the Deluge, which has given rise to so many cavils of the infidel, and causes perplexity to the half-hearted, but which, in the view of the faithful servant of GOD, is, from its very marvellousness, only a more sure evidence of GOD's power. GOD in His just anger decreed that He would destroy the whole human race save one family. Who are we that we should cavil at the means which He employed? Grant that the extraordinary fall of water can be accounted for on no principle of science—therefore it is to us more plainly a miracle. Grant that numbers of subsidiary miracles may have been needed to accomplish the work of destruction, and to preserve alive those whom GOD decreed to save, what is that but to say that GOD, having decreed a great miracle, did all that was needful to complete it? To say that a miracle or any amount of miracles is impossible is to beg the question—to say that they are improbable is only a private opinion. Others may entertain the opinion, that nothing is more probable or more certain than that GOD

should exert His power in any manner that He might please. It is absolutely impossible to disprove miracles by any *à priori* argument or hypothesis. We believe that they are amply proved by testimony. It is true that we are suspicious, and not without reason, of miracles which are sometimes heard of in these days,—as, for instance, the appearance of the Blessed Virgin to some children at La Salette. A single case not well authenticated does not command our assent. But our LORD wrought hundreds of miracles in the presence of hundreds of persons: multitudes brought their sick to be healed by Him, on account of the reputation of His miracles; and they are recorded by those who saw Him perform them. I do not see that greater proof of their reality could be expected or given.

LETTER XVIII.

SCIENTIFIC DIFFICULTIES—TESTIMONY.

I HAVE hitherto spoken little on that which is thought by some to be the chief difficulty as regards the absolute truth of Holy Scripture—the scientific difficulty. There are symptoms that amongst educated men the difficulty is passing away. It belongs rather to the early stages of scientific discovery than to the later. The true relation between science and revelation is beginning to be recognized. As I said in a former letter, it is admitted that they are not, so to speak, *in pari materiâ*. The Christian believes, indeed, that revelation and science, proceeding equally from the Fountain-Head of truth, must equally be true. But forasmuch as science is as yet but imperfectly apprehended, and revelation has reference to matters which transcend the human intellect, it must needs happen that apparent discrepancies will be found between them, and must continue until we have more perfect

knowledge. Of this I have before spoken. Hence the Christian is not disturbed by any difficulties which arise in this quarter; and even the sceptic is forced to admit that from the Christian point of view a scientific difficulty is no impeachment of the truth of the Bible.

There is a topic connected with the subject which I have not seen elsewhere discussed, but which appears to me to have an important bearing. It seems to be assumed by some that the demonstrations of science are a more certain source of knowledge than the testimony of history. Unquestionably in the exact sciences we have a certainty of demonstration which cannot be disputed. If there is any absolute certainty in any thing, it is in the conclusions of mathematics, geometry, or arithmetic. A sum of arithmetic rightly cast up is demonstrably true. A mathematical problem rightly worked out is not open to dispute. In geometry, trigonometry, and other branches of exact science, abstract problems worked on paper are absolutely certain. But when we come to the practical view of these sciences, it will at once be found that the element of testimony is very largely involved. I do not think that this point has been sufficiently considered by

those who lay so much stress on the certainty of science, in comparison with testimony. If the facts are assumed to be true, then with the help of science you may work a problem with certainty, but you are first to be sure of your facts, and these depend practically on testimony.

Let me endeavour to illustrate my meaning. Great interest has been lately attached to the recent eclipse of the sun. On a former occasion certain coruscations or emanations were observed at the time of the eclipse, designated as the sun's corona. It was thought highly important for scientific purposes that these phenomena, and others which might ensue, should be accurately observed and registered. Accordingly ships were fitted out, not by the English only, but by other nations, and scientific men were sent out, furnished with the most perfect instruments, to Gibraltar, Catania, Ceuta, and different places, in order to make the most careful observations; and although the circumstances were not altogether favourable, yet some important observations were made, and interesting facts have been registered. But it is evident that we who have stayed at home must take these observations as facts on the testimony of those who went

out to record them. The scientific men return home and report what they have seen, but to the rest of the world the belief in the facts rests simply on their testimony. Calculations may have been made with mathematical certainty on the data received, but the truth of these rests on the truthfulness of the report of those who made the observation. And even their truthfulness is not the only point to be considered, because their observations depend on the exact perfectness of the instruments which they have used, and perhaps on other circumstances. That these calculations, though made on strictly scientific principles, are liable to error is evident from the fact that there is at present, I believe, a difference of some millions of miles in the computation of the sun's distance from the earth.

Other sciences which are much thought of in the present day, are still more dependent on testimony than the science of astronomy. A lecturer on Geology, we will suppose, is addressing his audience, and attempting to illustrate the antiquity of pre-historic man. Here, he says, is a cast or drawing of a fossil skeleton found imbedded in a very ancient rock in the island of Guadaloupe. Is it not evident that his assertion depends on the testimony of many

persons, not all perhaps very competent to afford it—first, the person who found the skeleton; secondly, those who dug it up; thirdly, the persons who made the cast; fourthly, the person who brought it from Guadaloupe; fifthly, the lecturer himself? Dr. Buckland used to tell a story of a German professor of Geology, whose pupils would take him in by hiding sham fossils, and then managing to get him to the place that he might find them. Nay, Dr. Buckland's own pupils used to accuse the doctor himself, though of course incorrectly, of secreting selenites and the vertebræ of ichthyosauri and other things in the quarries of Headington Hill, that he might find them when he gave an open-air lecture. That this sort of proceeding is not altogether imaginary may be shown from the famous skull found among the flint arrow-heads at Amiens, which has been proved to have been dug up in the neighbouring churchyard. If the workmen in a quarry are aware that they will get a napoleon or two for a human bone in a certain position, they will not be long in finding one. It is evident that as far as the million are concerned, the greater part of geological science rests on testimony. The whole proof which

the lecturer gives of the principles of his science rests on the specimens ranged on the shelves of his lecture-room, and the casts and drawings of other specimens in other museums, the proof of the genuineness of which depends on testimony. I do not point out these facts to depreciate the value of testimony, but rather to enhance it, by showing how very largely it enters into almost all the knowledge which men possess; and how not scientific knowledge only, but the practical knowledge on which men act in the daily affairs of life depends mainly on the reliance which they place on testimony. In some sciences—as for instance in chemistry—a good deal of the certain knowledge which is attainable may be tested by experiment; but even here the ordinary inquirer has to take many things for granted on the word of his scientific superior.

And if in the practical working of the more exact sciences so much depends, as we have seen, on testimony, how much more is testimony the basis of the latest sciences of modern days—such as anthropology, ethnology, and the like—and yet one sometimes hears these inquiries classed as sciences, with the tacit assumption that the knowledge which they communicate is based on some surer foun-

dation than the testimony of history. History is, so to speak, the accumulation of testimony, and is, on the main, perfectly trustworthy for all the purposes for which it can be used. There is no reason to doubt, for instance, the general truth of the history of GOD'S chosen people, even taken as an ordinary history of great antiquity. But when we view it as written by holy men of old under the influence of Divine Inspiration, the credibility of it becomes greatly increased, and is placed on a par with the results of the exact sciences which we regard with absolute certainty.

LETTER XIX.

GENESIS I.

PERHAPS there is no part of the Bible which has been understood in more various ways than the first chapter of Genesis. Let us consider some of the different interpretations. It is the only part of the Bible which seems to have any real connexion, except accidentally, with science, or which can be said to treat in any way of scientific subjects. And after all the connexion is but slight. Some indeed consider it to be a myth or allegory. Some regard it as a psalm of praise offered up to GOD for His great glory—something like that beautiful ode, the 19th of the Psalms of David: "The heavens declare the glory of GOD, and the firmament showeth His handywork."

Supposing it to be, as it has been generally thought, historical, why, it may be asked with reverence, should Moses have written it? For these obvious reasons—first, because the subject of his book is the dealings of GOD with

man since the time of his being upon earth, and it was most natural to begin with the account of the manner of his being placed here, with all his accompaniments and surroundings. Secondly, it was necessary to correct the strange and uncouth superstitions that were prevalent in the world, and have more or less prevailed. The Egyptians believed "that the first men grew out of the earth like pumpkins." In the ancient books of Indian mythology it was supposed that the earth rested on the back of an elephant, and the elephant on a tortoise; what the tortoise stood on was not apparent. According to Berosus the Chaldean, the world was created in darkness, over which dominated a female power called Thalatta or Sea. Then Belus, wishing to carry on the creation work, clave Thalatta in twain—of the one half made he the earth, and of the other half the heavens. Then he cut off his own head, and mingling the blood which flowed from it with the dust of the earth formed man. Others, as Lucretius, following the doctrine of Epicurus, have imagined that the world is a fortuitous concurrence of atoms, that is, that the atoms which formed the world, being tossed and whirled about, happened somehow to come together in the beautiful shape in

which we now see them. Sir J. Lubbock mentions some tribes so savage as to have no idea of a creator. Others have imagined that the material world was evolved out of a cloud, and that in some way or other which they do not explain a "primordial organism" was developed, out of which grew the whole race of animals and vegetables, trees and plants, fishes, birds, and mammals, and lastly man himself. Some even have held that the material world is the very Deity Himself!

Clearly, therefore, it was important that a revelation from GOD to man should begin with the declaration that GOD is the Creator of all things visible and invisible, animate or inanimate—that He is the Eternal mighty Spirit who first created the universe, and now maintains and upholds it by His power. This will sufficiently account for the place which Creation occupies in the inspired volume. It was necessary to correct the fancies which had sprung up respecting the origin of the world, and by anticipation to preclude, as far as might be, the errors of future generations.

How then are we to understand the statements of Moses, viewed as history? Some take them quite literally, and believe that the visible world and all things in it were created

in six ordinary days. Some believe that it was created millions of ages ago, but fashioned for the use of man in six days. Others consider the six days to be ages of unknown duration. Others take the six days to be, not six consecutive days, but days taken out of each of six ages, in which Moses beheld, by a sort of second sight, a vision of the condition of the world in each of them. Some believe that, although revelation and science proceeding from the same infallible Truth must needs in reality coincide, yet—seeing that with our limited faculties we are imperfectly acquainted with the facts of science, and the criticism of Scripture—it must needs happen that, though perfectly coincident in reality, they will appear to be divergent, until we are better informed. This is an impregnable position, as old as St. Augustine, and meets every popular difficulty; yet, of course, it is more satisfactory to explain difficulties when we are able.

Some persons take yet a different view of the case, and so far from thinking that there is any thing vague or figurative in the first chapter of Genesis, look upon the statements contained in it as so wonderfully and exactly true, that if Moses had written no other part

of the Bible, this one chapter would afford a conclusive evidence of his inspiration—that the Jewish historian has so remarkably anticipated the facts which modern science has since confirmed, that he could have derived his information from no other source but GOD Himself. Let us give our attention more closely to this view of the subject.

First, the science of Geology has brought forward undeniable evidence that the materials of this planet are of almost incalculable antiquity. Long before the creation of man they were, so to speak, being gradually formed into shape for his use. Seas, rivers, mountains, strata of different sorts, coal, lime, iron, stone for building, were all being prepared for man long before he himself appeared upon the scene. This is chiefly proved by the fossil remains which are found in the different strata. Now when this discovery was first made it was thought by some to be contradictory to the Mosaic account. People had been accustomed to believe on the supposed authority of Revelation that the fabric of the earth, as well as man the lord of all, was of much more recent origin; and the account which Moses gives of these things did not seem to tally with the facts of science. But when we come to look

more closely at the words of Scripture, it is evident that the sacred historian was perfectly aware of the fact, which science has so recently discovered, of the world's great antiquity; and that his words fully answer to the circumstances of the case. "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth." It does not say when this original creation took place. Science seems to show that it was millions of years ago. And the words of Moses entirely agree with the fact. Both science and revealed history agree in teaching us that the fabric of the world existed long before man was created to live upon it.

Again the first movement towards the fashioning the earth in its present form was the creation of light. "GOD said, Let there be light, and there was light." But some have said, Moses is surely under a mistake here, for he tells us that the sun was not placed in the heavens to rule the day until the fourth period of creation. How could this be? How could light exist without the sun? Modern science answers the question, and teaches us, as Moses teaches us, that light is independent of the sun, and may exist without the sun's intervention. Philosophers tell us that "light, heat, electricity, and motion, are convertible terms."

The sun is merely the concentration of light, not the source of it. But these natural forces require an impulse from without. The Spirit of GOD was that impulse. "The Spirit of GOD moved upon the face of the deep." The Word of GOD said, "Let there be light, and there was light." Whether regarded as a substance or a force, light may have been transfused through the system long before it was concentrated in the sun. In fact if, as some suppose, the material world was evolved out of a nebula or chaos of elements mingled together in one rarefied mass, it is possible that the water would be separated from the land, as described by Moses, and the land be capable of sustaining animal and vegetable life long before the collection of light into a focus, and the appointment of the sun to be as we now see it, the ruler or regulator of the times and seasons.

There is another remarkable fact, which appears to be well worthy of note. How could Moses possibly know except by revelation the particular order in which the different objects were created? What clue had he to suppose that fishes, and reptiles, and birds, were created before beasts, and that man was the last as he was GOD'S greatest work? Until very recently

no facts of science were known, from which the order of creation could be at all inferred. We know now from Geology, as we knew before from Revelation, that such was the order of creation. There are rocks and strata of the earth in which there is no sign of animal life. The first fossils which we find are those of the simplest marine animals, then come the fishes, and vertebrate reptiles, then the remains of fossil birds appear, after them the higher order of quadrupeds, and lastly man. This is the very order in which Moses has placed them.

Of course in the present imperfect state of Geological science, it is not likely that all the details of science and revelation should exactly dovetail together. But the facts which I have stated have seemed to many to indicate in the sacred historian a knowledge of scientific phenomena so far beyond the intelligence of the age in which he lived, that he could not possibly have derived his information from any other source but from Divine inspiration. How could Moses, who had been taught by the wise men of Egypt that men grew out of the ground like pumpkins—how could he possibly know the order in which the different animal races were created? How could he know that light,

when set in motion by the Creative Spirit, was the moving force by which the elements were evolved? How could he know the vast antiquity of the visible world? Surely all this knowledge, so infinitely beyond any thing existing in the time in which he lived, could not have been obtained but by GOD'S revelation.

I confess I do not see how this conclusion can be refuted.

LETTER XX.

BEFORE THE FLOOD.

It is very difficult to realize to ourselves the state of things which existed in times long past. We can fancy any thing we please, but not satisfy ourselves that our fancy corresponds with the reality. A clever story was written some few years ago called "Realmah," the scene of which is laid in the lake-dwellings of so-called pre-historic times—though why they should be called pre-historic is not very evident, since old Herodotus describes lake-dwellings as existing in his own day. The time supposed in the story is at the transition period between the stone and bronze ages; and the hero gains to himself great renown by arming his countrymen, the dwellers on the lake, with bronze weapons, by means of which they vanquish their enemies, who were provided only with the old-fashioned flints—much as Von Moltke beat the Austrians by arming the Prussian soldiers with the needle-gun. There

is a number in the "Rambler," if I remember right, containing an antediluvian story, one incident of which was that two young people of about a hundred years old fell in love with each other, but their friends thought it would be more prudent for them to wait twenty or thirty years before they were united.

To speak more seriously, most people must have felt the difficulty of realizing the state of things which existed at that period of the world's history which intervenes between the Creation and the Flood, and from feeling this difficulty some have come to doubt, or speak slightingly of, the recorded facts. But this is unreasonable. We have just as much difficulty in realizing the circumstances of the lake-dwellers, or of the people who lived in the stone age of the world.

The period between the Creation and the Deluge has been commonly set down as about 1700 years, but there are circumstances which seem to show that there must be some error in the calculation of Archbishop Ussher and other chronologists, and that the period was longer than they imagine. But this is not of very great importance. With regard to the period itself, we might imagine two theories: one, that the state of things was altogether different

from that which now exists, and in some degree supernatural; for instance, the great duration of human life, the gigantic stature of some at least of the men who lived in those days, the intercourse between angelic beings—for so the old fathers understood the term the "sons of GOD" —and the daughters of men; then the terrible catastrophe which overwhelmed the whole race; all these things would seem to indicate a position of affairs altogether different from any thing which now exists. We might imagine that it was more like the state of things in some other planet. And why not? If any of the heavenly bodies be, as we suppose, habitable worlds, it were surely unreasonable to take for granted that the circumstances existing in them, the age and stature of the inhabitants, and their relation to the spiritual world, must needs be just like our own.

Others, perhaps, may take a different view. They may think it most probable that, notwithstanding some peculiarities, men lived before the flood much as they have done since; some lived in cities, some in the country, some in tents, and some in houses. Some we know were able to work in brass and iron, which seems to imply a considerable advance in civilization and art. Some were able to handle

the harp and the organ. In short, they ate and drank, married and were given in marriage, much the same as in all other ages. And violence and luxuriousness prevailed amongst them, as they do in the present world at this very day.

Different notions may be formed of the circumstances of the building of the ark. That the earth should be overspread by water will not seem strange to geologists, who are aware that there are evidences of many cataclysms more or less violent on the earth's surface. Believing then that such an event took place in the time of Noah, we may fancy to ourselves the mode in which the patriarch met the catastrophe—at least it is easy to imagine several theories, though difficult to decide between them. First, some might imagine that as the Deluge itself was brought about probably by miraculous agency, so the same agency may have been employed in assisting Noah to make his preparation and carry out his purpose. Others might suppose rather that the patriarch had to depend on human resources only. We have no certain information of the state of society then existing. Noah may have been a prince or great man with abundance of means at his command—he may have had all the same

resources as the Great Eastern Company and the Zoological Society to help him in constructing his ark and collecting its freight. To others the circumstances attending the building of the ark may appear likely to have been much more easy and commonplace.

We can imagine Noah and his three sons, well supplied with tools of iron and other appliances, to have gone into the forest and felled a suitable number of trees and squared them into beams, then to have lashed them together in the shape of a large raft, and to have built upon them loghouses or sheds according to the directions given; much as the rafts which are floated down the St. Lawrence and Mississippi—nay, even down the Thames, but larger. Nor would this proceeding necessarily imply any astonishment on the part of their neighbours. If we imagine lake-dwellings to have existed in those days, the ark may have been very much the same sort of structure, only built on floating beams instead of piles, and so suited to rise and fall with the water. Then, as to the collection of its living freight, I think Mr. Darwin will help us to understand this part of the subject. There was no need to collect all the different species; a pair of each genus or family would suffice. A pair of favourite dogs

might have been the progenitors of all the varieties of the canine race. When they had descended from their temporary prison, and began to multiply, some perhaps found that by speed they could catch the prey needful for their sustenance, and would gradually develope themselves into hounds. Others less fleet of foot, but endowed with keener scent, would find it necessary to creep upon their prey more warily. These would be the progenitors of the pointer or lurcher tribe. So with other animals; a pair of cats, or of tame leopards, young ones perhaps, might be the ancestors of the whole progeny of the feline race. The dove and the raven might form various species of birds. It is well known that the pigeon tribe will vary immensely even in a few generations. So that if any one is staggered by the notion of Noah having to provide accommodation for lions and tigers, and all the vast variety of the animal species, the difficulty would be removed by supposing that the patriarch simply got together pairs of the various animals that came to hand, which in most countries would comprise representatives of the different tribes that constitute the animal world, and on Mr. Darwin's hypothesis would develope themselves into all the species which we see around us.

Why have I put together these suppositions, which perhaps some persons may not think very wise ones? Simply because I imagine that many good sort of persons are staggered by the facts revealed in the Bible concerning the Flood and its antecedents. They seem to them of a fabulous character, and partly incredible—notwithstanding that our LORD Himself has distinctly confirmed them by His authority. I have shown that there are several hypotheses which separately, or at least conjointly, will account for all the phenomena recorded. Place yourself in imagination in an entirely novel and mysterious position, or amidst quite ordinary circumstances, or perhaps, more appropriately, amidst ordinary circumstances, with some few of a supernatural character, and the facts of the deluge are no more irreconcilable with probability than the facts discovered by scientific explorers of the lake-dwellings, or of the stone ages of so-called pre-historic times.

Perhaps you will blame me for treating grave subjects with something like banter. But it really is not at all so. These things must have happened in some way or other. If there is any more probable account of the circumstances than those which I have suggested, let it be

pointed out. To me I confess that any one of them seems perfectly credible. As a septuagenarian I believe the account of Noah's Ark and the Flood just as implicitly as when a child.

LETTER XXI.

AFTER THE FLOOD.

A GOOD deal of discussion has arisen amongst philosophers as to the original state of mankind, whether they were civilized or savages, Archbishop Whately and the Duke of Argyll take the side of civilization, Sir J. Lubbock and Mr Darwin the contrary. Sir John argues that the first man was decidedly a savage—first, because he had no clothing except coats of skins. Certainly, if broad cloth, cotton, or silk garments are a test of civilization, the observation is true. But Sir John declares, moreover, that the first man was, in a moral sense, no better than a savage, in that he could not resist the slightest temptation. I fear that in that sense there are a good many savages in civilized society. We should not forget that Adam and Eve before the fall lived in close communion with GOD. On the whole I am inclined to think that Milton's estimate of the moral state of our first parents is the right one.

But after all, the condition of Adam and Eve does not seem to have much to do with the question. We take our start from Noah and his family, who must have had the elements of civilization—not only in the knowledge of GOD, but also in a considerable acquaintance with the mechanical arts.

But why cannot we take simply the account given us in the oldest history extant as a solution of the point? We read that about a century after the Flood, the human family found themselves assembled on the plains of Shinar; and, without now speaking of the confusion of language or other matters which were miraculous, that they resolved to separate and spread themselves over the earth. What more perfectly natural? Can we not also readily conceive that there were great differences in the moral and intellectual capacity of those who departed from the parent stock? One detachment under an able leader would travel onwards till they arrived at the fertile valley of the Nile, and availing themselves of their skill in husbandry, they would cultivate the rich soil, and feel no desire to migrate farther. Something of the same sort would happen to those who found themselves on the plains of the Ganges, or still farther onward,

in the region now occupied by the Chinese. These detachments would form communities, more or less civilized, and grow into powerful nations. But suppose the case of others—those who migrated into the forests of Central Europe, or the steppes of Asia, or the Arctic regions. They would find themselves in a wild country, subject to the attack of savage beasts, which would follow on their track, and allow no leisure for the cultivation of the land, or the establishment of mechanical arts. Their chief requirement would be to furnish themselves with any weapon which came to hand. They would live in continual warfare with the beasts of the earth, or in pursuit of a precarious livelihood, spearing fish or seals, and trapping wild animals. Besides, some of the emigrants may have been under the guidance of vicious leaders, and have so deteriorated from their civilized condition.

Or again, some may have found themselves amidst a state of things where no labour was necessary to procure the necessaries of life, and may have degenerated into mere lotus-eaters, and soon acquired the habits of indolence and sensuality which a want of energetic occupation entails.

The account of the state of the world which

we receive, not only from the Bible but also from the earliest histories, seems to correspond exactly with what may have been expected. In the rich and favoured countries there has always been a race of men considerably advanced in civilization. Their very structures and works of labour, the palaces of Nineveh and Babylon, the temples and pyramids of Egypt, bear testimony to the comparatively advanced state of these nations, as regards both the knowledge of art and science, and the power of organizing large masses of people. In an inferior degree, the same evidence is furnished by the ponderous megalithic structures of Stonehenge and Abury, and other works which are found in different parts of the world, specially the massive buildings of Central America and India. Other regions seem to have been the dwelling of tribes whose first implements were mere flint arrow-heads, or axes of stone—though they also, if men of genius arose amongst them, or if they had intercourse with the civilized races, would gradually arrive at higher degrees of civilization, and become instructed in the arts of metallurgy and pottery.

All this seems to tally precisely with the historical accounts which we have in the Bible

of the dispersion and fortunes of the human family.

There is one difficulty—and that is the existence, as geologists tell us, of the remains of apparently human weapons in strata which, as they believe, must have been very long anterior to the age commonly assigned to the descendants of Adam. Well, if it be a difficulty, it is to be explained, if possible; if not, put up with. Perhaps the geologists are mistaken as to the antiquity of the strata in question, for the facts and theories of geologists are far from being in a settled state. Perhaps the flint weapons may have been introduced extraneously, that is, buried in the strata; perhaps the fossils found with them may have been more recent than they imagine. Perhaps there may have been a race of animals anterior to Adam, who had the faculty of making flint weapons. Who can tell? But surely this difficulty is not to be considered sufficient to overthrow the testimony of sacred and profane history, and the seemingly consistent account of the early civilization of mankind.

But there is a sort of perverse disposition in some men's minds to set aside, whenever they can, the authority of the Bible, and not allow

it even the weight which an uninspired history of the same ancient date would possess. When the arguments are doubtful, as in the case of civilization or non-civilization they may perhaps be thought to be, surely the most conclusive evidence of the truth must be the testimony afforded by a history of so great and acknowledged antiquity, even apart from its inspiration, much more when we believe that it was dictated by the Spirit of GOD.

LETTER XXII.

CIVILIZATION.

It has been much and most justly insisted on by some recent writers that there is a marked and invariable distinction between man and every other animal, in their capacity of civilization. Other animals remain in precisely the same state from generation to generation. They never advance—they make the same nests or cells, and never improve upon them, whereas man is constantly progressive, always inventing, and each new invention is but a stepping-stone to something further. I do not think that there is any answer to this theory. It seems to prove conclusively that man is entirely distinct from every other creature which exists.

Let us then imagine the progress of civilization. The first step in civilization would be articulate speech. "The roots of language," says Professor Max Müller, "are phonetic types produced by power inherent in human nature.

They exist, as Plato would say, by nature;—though, with Plato, we should add that when we say by nature, we mean by the hand of GOD. . . . . Man in his primitive and perfect state was not only endowed like the brute with the power of expressing his sensations. . . . He possessed likewise the faculty of giving more articulate expression to the natural conceptions of his mind. That faculty was not of his making. It was an instinct, an instinct of the mind as irresistible as any other instinct. So far as language is the production of that instinct, it belongs to the realm of nature" [or as Plato would have said, it is a gift of GOD].

As other animals are enabled by nature to express their limited wants and feelings by various sounds—so, it may reasonably be inferred, that a being like man, endowed with a vast variety and modification of thought and feeling, would be enabled to give expression to those feelings from the first. This view, resting on the authority of Plato and Professor Max Müller, does not seem to admit of refutation. It is, of course, impossible to say whether our first parents were miraculously endowed with the power of speaking at once grammatically, or whether they gradually acquired

it. But having the gift of intellect, and the power of articulate speech, the rest would very soon follow.

Another great step in civilization is the art of writing, or the association of written characters with articulate sounds. One of the oldest books, if not the very oldest book, known to be extant in the world is the Pentateuch, or writings of Moses forming the first part of the sacred Scriptures. The invention seems to have been purposely granted in order to preserve the revealed Word of GOD. We find amongst a nation of wanderers just escaped from bondage, a nation by no means remarkable for superior intelligence—we find existing amongst them the difficult art of writing, a complete alphabet or system of letters expressive of articulate sounds, by which their remarkable history, their laws and institutions, and the records of GOD's dealings with them, have been handed down to the present time. Can it be that the first written characters in the world were those which were inscribed by the finger of GOD Himself on the tables of stone when He appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai, and so this wonderful art was a direct revelation from heaven? Or did GOD inspire Moses or some other of His servants with the

idea?—as we know, when He willed that the Ark of the Covenant and His Tabernacle should be constructed in elaborate workmanship, He filled Bezaleel and Aholiab with the spirit of wisdom and understanding to work in gold and silver and brass and carving of wood. Or did the art grow up gradually, and culminate in the Ten Commandments? That would in itself be very remarkable.

Some, indeed, have imagined that portions of the books of Moses were taken by him from former documents. It is very possible that he may have interwoven with his narrative the traditions of older times—the record of the creation, the history of the patriarchs, the touching narrative of Joseph; or he may have found them recorded in the Egyptian hieroglyphics, and have been directed by the HOLY GHOST to embody them in his history. All we know is, that at or about[1] the time of the first revelation of GOD'S Word, when holy men

[1] It is now generally believed that the Egyptians used not only hieroglyphics, but also what is termed the "cursive hieratic character" before the Exodus. And such documents are believed to be in existence. Still that does not disprove the assertion that the invention of letters was purposely granted by Divine Providence in order to preserve the Revealed Word. Besides, the exact date of the Exodus itself is not certainly known.

began to write as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST, the use of letters was invented. That art which furnishes us with the records of past ages, the power of communicating with the men of other days, or with those who live at the distance of half the globe—that art without which neither the facts of history, nor the discoveries of science, nor the opinions and thoughts of men could be preserved—the foundation of all our literature and knowledge—the means by which the news of current events is spread each day throughout the land, and all the ideas and wants of men made known to each other—so that every day we have, as it were, a picture given us of all that is going on in the world around us—that wonderful art of writing was, as it would seem, given by Divine Providence, for the purpose of preserving the Ten Commandments and the memory of GOD'S dealings with His people. And, therefore, when we teach our children to read for the express purpose that they may read the Bible, we are really employing letters for the very purpose for which GOD designed them. And he who thus avails himself of his power to read the Word of GOD humbly and reverently, even though he should read nothing else, is doing more for the glory of GOD,

is taking surer steps to raise himself in the scale of civilization, and improve his understanding, and exalt his nature, than the most learned man who ever lived, if he pervert the powers of his mind to vain and sinful purposes, or the dissemination of evil thoughts and opinions. Alas, the noblest art is but a curse, the most cultivated intellect is but an object of pity, if it be not directed to the end for which it was designed—the glory and honour of GOD.

I might go on to trace the improvement of language which resulted, as might have been anticipated, from the invention of letters, until it arrived at its greatest perfection in that tongue in which it pleased GOD to deliver the last and greatest revelation of His will. The exquisite precision and force of the Greek language, joined, as it is in the New Testament, with the popular idiom of the East—that language in which the heavenly discourses and parables of our LORD and the Epistles of St. Paul were written—cannot be supposed to have been produced by chance at the precise time when GOD willed that His Gospel should be written and preached to all people. If we acknowledge in these things, as we surely must, the overruling providence of GOD, it is impos-

sible to believe that, when He had decreed that His Gospel should be spread through the world, He took no thought about the language in which it should be written. Far more reasonable is it to suppose that all was arranged and brought about with a view to spread the knowledge of Divine truth in the language most suitable for its dissemination.

Passing on in the history of the world, we find another invention which has greatly influenced the character of modern days. I mean the art of printing. Now the art of printing, unlike the invention of letters, is in itself one of the simplest things imaginable. When you have once got the idea of letters standing for articulate sounds, which is the real point of difficulty, and when you have them carved on stone or written on parchment, the idea of multiplying copies by means of types, one would have thought, would have followed naturally. In fact, many things nearly resembling printing have been for ages known and practised. A seal, or an engraving, or a stamp, what is it but a print? Yet strange to say, a period of nearly three thousand years elapsed after the invention of letters and the writing of books, before men thought of multiplying their books by the simple art of printing.

About three centuries and a half ago a great movement took place in the world's affairs, a movement accompanied, as all such movements must be, with mingled good and evil. We cannot doubt that it was Providential, and the movement was accomplished mainly through the instrumentality of the press. Copies of the Bible, and of the works of ancient Fathers of the Church were printed and disseminated, and the more learned and pious were taught to discriminate between the ancient doctrine and usages of the Apostolic age and the corruptions of modern times, and were enabled to check the progress of corruption, and reform many things which needed Reformation.

I am aware that evil as well as good has resulted from these events. No serious Christian can do otherwise than regret the heresies and schisms which in these latter days so lamentably abound. But it is probable that things would be ten times worse without the Bible in our hands. The good it does is tenfold greater than the evil to which it may have been perverted. If some have made irreverent and unholy use of God's Word, thousands have derived from it the daily comfort of their souls, and, through reading and digesting it, have come to embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of salvation.

Let us then give glory to GOD for having taught us the art of printing.

There is yet another invention of man to which I must advert, as having brought about great changes in our times, and being likely to exercise a still greater influence on the world's destinies—and that is the power of the steam-engine. It is now nearly two hundred years since this important power was discovered, but it is only within the present century that it has been applied to locomotion and those various purposes of art for which it is now so generally used. Now can we for a moment suppose that this mighty engine has been given to us by Almighty GOD merely that we may be able to travel from place to place with somewhat greater speed, or that we might manufacture for ourselves finer or more abundant clothing? Is there no higher purpose than this? We think too much of our poor comforts and conveniences if we make them of first importance, Can we discern no indications of the operation of a Divine Providence, whereby this, as well as other inventions, shall work for the glory of GOD? When we remember that prophecy has declared with no uncertain voice that there shall be in the latter days a great running to and fro and multiplication of knowledge, and

spreading of the Gospel through the world—that every land and shore shall hear the tidings of salvation—that not civilized nations only, but the uncivilized heathen—all shall have the Gospel preached unto them, can we doubt that this new and wonderful invention is destined to contribute to the fulfilment of the decrees of Providence? and this not only by the increased facility of communication—for the power of moving from place to place would be of little value, and would be little used, unless there were sufficient objects for frequent intercourse: and this motive of intercourse is furnished by the same great power of steam in the infinite multiplication of those various manufactures and wares with which our ships are freighted, in order that they may bring back in exchange the products of other lands.

Have you ever watched in spring time the bee which flits from flower to flower, and are you aware that not only is it gathering honey for its own use, but also that it conveys to the flower that pollen or minute powder which causes the seed to germinate? Just so our merchants and mariners, in their eager pursuit after wealth, carry with them from shore to shore the seeds of the Gospel of Truth. And we doubt not that as GOD placed the drop of

honey in the heart of the flower for the very purpose of attracting thither the busy insect which should convey to it the seed of reproduction, so He has distributed in different regions of the world those various products—the cotton or the silk, the tea or the indigo, the ivory or the gold—which shall tempt the enterprising trafficker, and open the way for the missionary to sow the seed of life in the hearts of men.

Oh, if we could thus learn to look on our arts and inventions, our skill and industry, our literature and commerce, as so many means afforded to us of promoting GOD'S glory, what an expansive field of contemplation is open to us! Worldly men will see no extraordinary marks of Providential agency in these matters: they will discern in their arts and sciences nothing more than the mere inventions of men and the progress of civilization—they will recognize in them nothing more important than the means of increasing our wealth and power, or ministering to our comforts and luxuries; they will see in our ships nothing more than the means of sending our merchandise to foreign lands, and bringing back their wealth to our shores; they will discern in our literature and our press only the opportunity of spreading

useful knowledge, or furnishing amusement, or advancing our views on temporal subjects. Nay, too many, I fear, will discern in these things not the glory of GOD, but the glory of man—indications only of man's power and wisdom; and each new discovery will be hailed merely as a triumph of the human intellect.

But let us once impress on our minds the great truth that all things are working together for the glory of GOD, and that the glory of GOD is best promoted by the salvation of man—that the great object of GOD's Providence is to prepare the elect of the different nations of the earth for the reception of the truth and the inheritance purchased for them by the SON of God, to build up a Holy Church, a peculiar people called to a heavenly kingdom: once let us imbue our minds with the great truth that the salvation of the souls of GOD's saints, until GOD shall have made up the number of His elect, is the object of the very continuance of the earth—that all around is but a passing pageant, or, as it were, a temporary framework which will soon be swept away, and burnt up as a scroll—while the souls of those who have stood the trial flame, like gold tried in the furnace, will be gathered into the bright abode of heaven, there to glorify GOD through eternal

ages; once let us learn to realize these great truths of Scripture with a living faith—and how will our views of earthly things be changed! What a different estimate shall we form of those things which now seem to us so all-important! How differently shall we view our arts and inventions and science, our commerce, our activity and skill! We shall not despise them—far from it. We shall view them in their true light, as so many means and opportunities whereby GOD'S glory is to be promoted, and His name magnified, and His holy ones prepared for heaven.

LETTER XXIII.

PROGRESS OF HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION.

THOUGH I have written you a long letter on Civilization, there remains one topic to which I have but lightly adverted, and to which I must again call your attention; because I do not remember to have seen it elsewhere discussed, though it appears to me to have a good deal of weight;—that is the fact, that Civilization seems to have advanced, *pari passu*, with History, just according to the ratio which might have been anticipated. Supposing the generally-received history of the world to be in the main correct, the gradual development of civilization appears to correspond with such a supposition. There may have been greater progress at some particular times than at others, there may have been dark ages of more or less duration, when civilization was checked for a while, or even retrograded; still on the whole the progress of arts and science and literature has been what we might have

expected in the time assigned. Indeed we can trace with tolerable accuracy the course which it has taken from the earliest times of the Egyptian and Babylonish kingdoms, through the civilization of Greece and Rome, its partial declension after the breaking up of the Roman empire, the bursting out of energetic thought in the sixteenth century, and its rapid development since that period. There is not much unaccounted for. The Jewish civilization and literature were exceptional, and such as would hardly have grown up of themselves. Chinese progress—or rather non-progress—is an enigma; and it has puzzled antiquarians to understand how the men who lived in an unscientific age, could move such ponderous weights as the massive structure of Stonehenge. These, however, are minor difficulties.

On the other hand, if we suppose that the world is a great deal older than is generally supposed—twice, three times, or infinitely more than this, as some affirm—all our notions of the progress of civilization become perplexed. The human mind has been of much the same calibre formerly as now. When, therefore, we see the wonderful progress of art and science in our own century, and in our

own generation, how can we account for the tardy progress of discoveries in earlier times? If man has lived upon the earth a great deal longer than has been usually computed, why did not arts and inventions take their rise earlier? Why were not rifled-cannon used at the siege of Troy? Why, instead of the beacon-fires by which the capture of that city was heralded to Greece, was there not a submarine telegraph across the Ægean? Why have we not photographs of the great men of ancient days? Why were not printing and steam-engines long ago invented?

It may be said that civilization was cut short at the Deluge, and every thing began again, except what had been acquired by Noah and his sons. That is highly probable. But that is not what some will consent to admit. They rather dwell on an uninterrupted career of progress from the state of savages, commencing in unknown prehistoric antiquity; and on that supposition it appears to me that the civilization of the world, if we can at all judge by the actual rate of progress, must have advanced to the present state which we witness around us at a very much earlier period of the world's history. If we go by the commonly-received Bible history, con-

firmed as it is by other ancient histories which we possess, all seems easy to be understood. We can trace each step in its due order. Though there may have been pauses, yet there is no break in the chain of events. But on the other supposition of uncounted ages every thing seems perplexing and uncertain.

The same sort of feeling oppresses us if we imagine the world and all that is in it to have been existing from all eternity. How is it that the inferior creation were so long in developing themselves into vertebrates, and vertebrates into mammalia, and mammalia into man? Given eternal ages for the process of development, the higher order of beings must have come, one would think, much sooner; nay, they must have always existed. There can have been no date to the first organism, no cause for its coming into being when it did, no accounting for the period or mode of its first appearance, or why it did not appear millions of ages earlier. It is difficult to express our thoughts on the subject; but on the supposition of things having been going on progressing from eternity, one would think that the highest possible degree of progress must have been attained, one cannot say when, but much anterior to any period of which we have the

remotest conception. These difficulties in "imaginative science" seem inexplicable. The Bible history, simply taken, explains all.

There are other manifest difficulties in respect to the theory of progress from times anterior to the historical. Professor Tyndal, speaking of the theory of evolution from a nebula, says, "The process must be slow that commends the theory of natural evolution to the public mind. For what are the core and essence of the hypothesis? Strip it naked, and then you stand face to face with the notion that not alone the more ignoble forms of animalcular and animal life, not alone the nobler forms of the horse and lion, not alone the exquisite and wonderful mechanism of the human body, but that the human mind itself—emotion, intellect, will, and all their phenomena, were once latent in a fiery cloud. Surely the mere statement of such a notion is more than a refutation." Still more violent would seem the hypothesis that the human intellect and affections, the mind of Plato, Shakespeare, Newton, and Da Vinci, were contained in the body of an ape. "Modern scientific thought," says the Professor, "is called upon to decide!" Professor Tyndal affords an admirable instance of the great and noble sentiments of a philo-

sopher, conjoined with what I must term the low views of a nineteenth-century man. Perfectly conversant with the lofty aspirations of modern philosophy, and apparently not unacquainted with the Christian faith; able to express the claims of each in most eloquent language, he arrives at the poor conclusion, that "modern scientific thought is called upon to decide between them." Truly a most ignoble bathos, when we have the Word of the Eternal GOD Himself to teach us the solution of the question.

LETTER XXIV.

PROPHECY AND ITS FULFILMENT.

In gathering up our "Thoughts on the Bible," we must not omit to speak on Prophecy. It is a wide subject, difficult to comprise in moderate bounds. In fact, the whole of the Old Testament is in a manner one great prophecy, and the whole of the New Testament is its fulfilment. The Incarnation of the Son of God is the grand central fact of the world's history to which all things both before and after bear relation. From the first obscure promise of a Saviour, when God declared that the "seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," down to the time of Malachi, who announced, "Behold, I send My messenger, and he shall prepare My way before Me: and the Lord Whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple," all is more or less a preparation for the greatest of all events, the Incarnation of the Son of God, that He might bring salvation to His people. The call

of Abraham, and the promise that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed—the same promise repeated to Isaac and Jacob—the significant ordinance of the Passover, prefiguring the salvation of GOD'S people by the blood of CHRIST, the bringing in of the chosen nation to the promised land, typical of the progress towards heaven of GOD'S elect—the whole scope and object of the ceremonial law—the sin-offering, the burnt-offering, the peace-offering, the scape-goat, all emblematic of the one great Sacrifice on the Cross, the selection of the royal line of David; then the volume of the ancient prophets, in which are gradually unrolled all the great events of our Saviour's life and character and ministry; the constant allusion to the spiritual kingdom which He would found upon the earth by the union of the remnant of the faithful Israelites with the Gentile nations under Messiah the Prince: the various circumstances of His life and ministry sometimes plainly and unequivocally predicted, sometimes more obscurely adumbrated, yet every where present to the faithful mind—the Branch that should spring from the decayed root of Jesse, the ensign set up on a hill to which the Gentiles should be rallied—the blessings of GOD'S promised king-

dom—every page of prophecy, in short, teeming with plain declaration, which he who ran might read; or with allusions, and hints, and coincidences in which pious minds recognized intimations of the one great subject, the coming of the Lord—these, more or less, pervade the whole substance of the Old Testament; and thus it is not too much to say that the whole of that Ancient Book is one continued prophecy of the Incarnation.

Yes, and the whole of the New Testament, and all history down to the present time is one continued record of the fulfilment of prophecy —the Incarnation of the Son of GOD, and the gathering in of the nations to His Kingdom; the miraculous Birth; the life and ministry of our LORD; the preaching of the Gospel to the poor; the healing of the broken-hearted; the deliverance of the captives of sin—then His death on the Cross, when He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and the minute circumstances of His Crucifixion, His glorious Resurrection, and the dispensation of the Gospel to the world; the spread of His Kingdom from land to land; the change wrought in the moral and social condition of mankind; the overthrow of ancient heathendom; the gathering in of the nations one by one—nay, each indi-

vidual soul which is saved from sin and death, and added to the number of the elect,—all these form one continued fulfilment of the prophecies which had been delivered concerning the Incarnation of the Son of GOD.

The opponents of religion ignore this universal testimony of prophecy, and raise cavils against this or that prediction which seems to them obscure or inapplicable, whereas the great weight of prophecy depends on the accumulated mass of evidence ever developing itself more and more through all ages of the world—the concentration of all history upon the one great fact of Revelation, the coming in the flesh of the Son of GOD. Not but that there are many plain and undeniable prophecies, the weight of which, independently of the rest, is irresistible to a candid mind. It is impossible in one letter to do any thing like justice to the innumerable single predictions which might be cited. I must content myself with adverting to some few topics which appear to me of undeniable cogency.

First, the prophecies relating to the character of the Messiah. Turn first to the ninth chapter of Isaiah, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall

be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Turn next to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, in which the Messiah is described in such different characters as "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief . . . wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." Nay, this apparently contradictory character is given in the very same prediction, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; *because* He hath poured out His soul in death." No one ever lived upon the earth who has realized, or could by possibility realize, these predictions except the man Jesus Christ, who was persecuted and rejected by His fellow-countrymen, and now is risen from the dead and reigns far above all principalities and powers, God in heaven above, nay, is recognized by the civilized world as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

This will lead to the other two topics of which I propose to speak; and the peculiar force of these prophecies, to which I am about to advert, is that they are such as we may verify for ourselves by our own personal know-

ledge—I mean the respective fortunes of the Jewish and the Christian Churches. Take first the case of the Jews. It was distinctly foretold of this nation that their prosperity or adversity should depend on their faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the Divine Ruler; and the whole course of their history, its vicissitudes of good or evil, correspond exactly with the prediction. Specially, the very mode of their singular judgment was predicted. "The LORD, said Moses, shall scatter thee amongst all nations from one end of the earth to another . . . . and among these nations thou shalt have no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest." And in another place, "I will bring thy land to desolation, and your enemies that dwell therein shall be astonished at it, and I will scatter you among the heathen." No one can be ignorant how exactly and literally this prophecy has been fulfilled in respect to the people of the Jews. There is not a nation under heaven in which there are not to be found representatives of the Jewish race, still maintaining their ancient customs, a peculiar people distinct from those amongst whom they sojourn.

Not less evident and remarkable is the fortune of the Christian Church. Our Lord

appeared in humble station, and avowed Himself as the founder of a new religion. By force of His Divine power and holy character He gathered round Him a few lowly disciples, and before He departed from them He gave them the unheard-of commission, that they should go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the HOLY GHOST: and this without a shadow of doubt of its accomplishment. Many times also during His ministry He spoke with the most perfect confidence of the success of His undertaking. Every parable almost is a prophecy. He compares His kingdom which He was founding to leaven working in meal till the whole was leavened, to a grain of mustard seed which should grow into a wide-spreading tree. In the parable of the sower He describes the very manner in which His teaching would be received. All this is in exact accordance with the predictions of the older prophets in which the glories of the Messiah's Kingdom are so graphically described. Cast your eyes now over the world, and see the evident fulfilment of the prediction, so improbable in itself, and yet so undeniable. The whole civilized world acknowledges the dominion of the Crucified—the whole framework of modern

society is built on the faith of CHRIST. No doubt there are drawbacks. There are stubborn superstitions yet to be subdued—and some even amongst ourselves who do not believe. Yet when we see that the world is being overspread with colonists from Christian states, we can come to no other conclusion but that the religion of CHRIST is destined to be spread throughout the world, and that in every nation they that believe will be saved.

There are those who speak of the decay of Christianity. But let me point out only two facts in the history of the Eastern and Western Churches. Since the division of the East and West, the former Church has converted to the faith the whole of the vast empire of Russia, while the Western Church has spread its missions over whole continents. North America, South America, Australia, New Zealand, now rank among Christian nations. Nor is it too sanguine to hope and believe that a new energy has been kindled amongst ourselves, which in spite of the contradiction of sinners, bids fair not only to maintain, but to spread more widely the kingdom of CHRIST.

LETTER XXV.

RIDICULE.

To come now to practical matters. It is a very bad habit, which some people have, and these not always wilfully bad people, of making jokes about the Bible, silly puns about Scriptural names, ridiculous jests about Scriptural incidents. One evil result of such irreverent proceedings is that one can never, all one's life afterwards, hear the name or the incident without the danger of the unseemly jest recurring to the mind, and provoking a smile in the most solemn moment. People who make such jests ought to be aware that it is one of the poorest attempts at wit—the stupidest persons can catch some foolish jingle of words, and turn them into a pun.

Something akin to this is the common habit which some newspaper writers have of interlarding their articles with irreverent allusions to the Holy Scriptures. When the matter is serious, and the Scriptural allusions apposite,

they may be used with propriety and effect—but an allusion to Scripture brought forward in connexion with some trivial matter causes a painful feeling. One pictures to oneself what sort of man the writer is—what his antecedents: one imagines him to be the son of pious parents, one whose childhood was nurtured in holy ways, at least in the knowledge of holy things, and carefully taught the Bible; but now mixed up with the world, and fallen into evil courses, he makes use of the familiar language and thoughts in which he was trained, only to give point to his satire by some irreverent sentence, or by some unsuitable collocation. One cannot but feel sorry for the man. But of course the worst class of the ridiculers of the Holy Scriptures are those who of malicious purpose endeavour to turn holy things into ridicule. It is a principle of human nature, and not of human nature only—the almost universal desire to bring others to the same way of thinking as ourselves. In good men this is not to be wondered at, because if a man sincerely believes that he has found the truth, and has a good hope of everlasting happiness, it is quite natural that he should be anxious to communicate to others also the same bright hopes and glorious privileges. But for those who have

no such hope—those who have no faith in the blessed Gospel—no belief in a Saviour, for such as these to endeavour to rob their fellow-men of their faith and hope, and bring them into the same state of misery and unbelief with themselves, is a strange phenomenon, reminding one most forcibly of the arch-fiend himself, who, having lost heaven, endeavours to draw others into the same miserable state with himself.

Perhaps the most unaccountable thing is that sceptics of all men should have this propensity. By sceptics I understand those men who profess themselves to be in doubt, and to be making inquiry after truth. They are a very unaccountable class of men. One can imagine a person at some period of his life to have doubts of the truth of the Bible, or of parts of it. But some sceptics are men whose profession is to go on doubting to the end of their lives, never making up their minds, but questioning every thing, doubting every thing. This is in itself a strange state of mind to be in: but what is still more remarkable is, that these men often should take a sort of malicious pleasure in unsettling the minds of others.

One common weapon of the infidel in endeavouring to draw others from the faith is the

use of ridicule. Ridicule is one of the most efficient weapons for attacking the truth of the Bible. But what, let us inquire, is the cause of the efficiency of this weapon? The sole cause of its mischievous power is the weakness and supineness of the generality of mankind, and their ignorance of the real weakness of the enemies of truth. One of the writers of the "Essays and Reviews" arguing against prophecy, says,—"If our German (Baron Bunsen) had ignored all that the masters of philosophy have proved on these subjects, his countrymen would have raised such a storm of ridicule, that he must have drowned himself in the Neckar." So for fear of being laughed at the sceptic must renounce principles which have been accepted by Christians of all ages—some of them the most able and learned. But in truth ridicule is no argument, but a mere delusive substitute for it. It is like the flag fastened at the end of a lance which flutters in the breeze and scares the coward, but has no danger for those who have but the firmness to withstand it. Just so, ridicule frightens and abashes the timid man, and exposes him to the danger of being overthrown and wounded, but has no force or efficacy against him who has the sense and firmness to

resist. It is, in reality, a pointless weapon. Imagine a man being laughed out of his religion, scared out of his hopes of heaven, by some silly sarcasm like that we have just quoted. The very use of ridicule is an argument against him who uses it; for in every sincere argument or deliberation between man and man, where truth is the object, ridicule is left out of the question. It is therefore plain that it is for no good purpose of discovering truth when the power of ridicule is applied to things far too serious to be spoken of otherwise than with sober sincerity. We may always, therefore, suspect the sincerity of the man who uses this weapon against religion. It is not fair and open warfare. Ridicule, forcible as it is in dealing with those who know not its weakness, is but an apology for argument; and we may conclude that, when ridicule is used, no sound argument is to be found. It is only when other arguments have failed that ridicule is brought up as a reserve, and truth which cannot be refuted is attempted to be laughed at.

Again, it is against holy and sacred subjects especially that ridicule is most successful. The more holy and sacred things are, the more effect will ridicule have on weak and unstable minds. When a subject is really grave and serious, it

needs no cleverness, nothing but boldness and impudence, to display the contrast. I argue, therefore, that the very fact of a subject being easily turned into ridicule is a proof of its real seriousness and solemnity; because such subjects are precisely those which are most easily ridiculed. It requires no wit or cleverness to ridicule the Holy Scriptures. Any foolish person may make jokes about the Bible. But as any foolish person can ridicule things holy and sacred, so those persons are themselves generally foolish, weak, and unstable, to whom holy things appear ridiculous. The wise man perceives the fallacy, the good man is shocked. It is only because too many men are neither good nor wise, but weak, foolish, and wicked, that the power of ridicule, when applied to holy things, is so dangerous as it is.

For obvious reasons I cannot give illustrations of the argument, but must beg you to consider it as it stands.

LETTER XXVI.

UNBELIEF—SCEPTICISM.

THERE is a notion with some that belief or unbelief are not of a moral nature, the consequence of choice, but are to every man necessary and unavoidable. When a proposition, say they, is presented to the mind, a man believes or disbelieves it according as the thing appears to him probable or improbable, true or false. He is not responsible for the way in which it strikes him, or for the judgment which he forms. And therefore, they argue, belief cannot be the object of GOD'S approbation, nor unbelief of His displeasure—much less can faith be the ground of everlasting reward, and the want of it of eternal punishment.

All this, as I need scarcely point out, is directly contrary to the Bible, in which faith is commended and approved, and spoken of as that whereby we please GOD. Justification from sin, pardon for our offences, and eventual salvation, are promised as its consequences.

Unbelief, on the other hand, is censured and forbidden, and threatened with punishment. "If ye believe not that I am He," said CHRIST, "ye shall die in your sins." "He that believeth on the SON hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not shall not see life." S. Paul in a very solemn manner cautions the brethren: "Take heed," he says, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief."

A very slight consideration will suffice to show us that the objection results from the most superficial reasoning, and from an entire ignorance of the mechanism of the human intellect. Man's reason is not like a balance which weighs with strict exactness that which is presented to it; on the contrary, it is biassed one way or another by a variety of considerations. The feelings, the affections, the passions, the acquired habits, the imagination, the taste, interest, hope, fear, caprice, vanity—all these influence the reason in its decision. Therefore, in order to secure a right judgment, all our various faculties ought to be in a sound and healthy condition; at least there should be no disturbing force so powerful as to displace reason from her tribunal.

Hence it is evident that reason, if not itself a moral faculty, yet is dependent on those

moral faculties over which each man has control, for the due exercise of its functions; and its decision will be in accordance with the moral character of each man—fair or unfair, honest or dishonest, rash or prudent, wise or unwise, according as the man himself is partaker of one or other of these qualities.

And therefore each man is responsible for the judgment which he forms. If a conclusive argument or well-attested fact is presented to a person, and, through prejudice or passion, or wilfulness, he will not believe it, he is considered by every one to be responsible for his unbelief. It is no valid excuse to say that he could not help disbelieving it. We see constant examples in which the plainest evidence is set aside, the clearest language distorted, by those who are determined to maintain their own views at any cost. When once a proud, bigoted, or interested man, or knot of men (for that is always worse) have taken up one side of a question, not all the powers of argument and evidence will move them to acknowledge their error and receive the truth. Are they, then, irresponsible for their error? Do we not justly blame them for their culpable blindness? The world, at any rate, makes very little allowance for those who come to

misfortune from their own wilfulness. If a man about to cross a river sees a notice that it is dangerous to pass, but thinks he knows better, and disbelieves it, and is drowned, all persons will acknowledge that he lost his life through his own wilfulness. If a man embarks his fortune in a foolish speculation, in spite of the advice and remonstrances of his friends, and so ruins himself and his family, it is not held to be sufficient excuse that he did not believe his friends, but thought himself wiser. If a good father warns his son against the errors of youth, and tells him that if he yields to them he will bitterly rue his folly, but the foolish youth imagines that he can enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, and repent when he chooses; and it falls out, as it does with thousands, that sin once admitted acquires a hold from which he never escapes, would any one say that his punishment was undeserved? The whole practice of the world illustrates the fact that belief or unbelief are in a great measure moral qualities, and that men are held responsible for them, and for all the consequences, good or evil, which result from them.

The same principle applies to the acceptance or non-acceptance of revealed truth. GOD sends HIS SON with a message of mercy to mankind,

warning them of the dangers of sin, declaring to them the certain consequences of persisting in it, and at the same time revealing to them the way of pardon and salvation. On what conceivable ground, when summoned to the bar of judgment, can we set up the plea for our continuance in sin, that we did not believe our danger, nor see how the Gospel could help us. Will not the justice of GOD be made manifest before saints and angels when He declares to us at the last day that we are condemned by reason of our unbelief?

Moreover, unbelief is connected in the Bible with "an evil heart." "Take heed," says St. Paul, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." This is a difficult topic. What! some will exclaim, do you mean to say that every one who cannot accept the doctrine of the Bible must needs be a bad, evil-hearted man? I do not think that the proposition can be laid down quite so broadly as this, but I fear that the qualification of it which I would admit will be equally unpalatable to some of the men of this generation. If I were to say that some who do not believe might escape on the plea of invincible ignorance, or insuperable prejudice, I should not mend the matter in their view. However, I think the doctrine may be

rendered more palatable in this way:—as it can never be supposed that men living in countries remote from the preaching of the Gospel —Mahometans, Buddhists, or other heathen nations who have never heard the Word preached—will be condemned for unbelief, so one may imagine that in this country there may be men even of education, nay, very clever men, so hampered by the associations which surround them, so environed with a particular tone of thought, which has prejudiced them against revelation, that they have never, so to speak, had a fair chance of believing. And yet, to set against this, it may be said that in this Christian country no man can hear the church bells sound without knowing that it is a call to him to serve GOD. It is not for us to make excuses for the scepticism of men of the present day, neither are we called on to pass judgment on them.

However, in reference to the connexion of an evil heart with unbelief I would earnestly request any one who is conscious of a spirit of scepticism within him to ponder on the following considerations. Take, first, the case of a man who has given way to sin. The pure religion of CHRIST sets itself against all sin without exception. Therefore they who will

not give up their sins are predisposed against the Gospel. A man who has contracted evil habits, who knows he has contracted them, but has not the will or energy to shake them from him, even though he knows full well that the Bible pronounces condemnation against them, such a man is tempted to cherish a secret scepticism, as a last hope of escaping eternal misery. Too wicked or too irresolute to seek GOD'S mercy, he ventures to impeach His truth, and adopt the monstrous absurdity that the Ruler of the universe either cannot or will not punish sin. He strives, like the foolish ostrich, to escape the destruction that awaits him by blinding his eyes against it.

And not only does flagrant immorality thus bring with it a temptation to scepticism, but many other things which are equally contrary to the holiness of GOD'S law—inordinate ambition, covetousness, a life given to pleasure, or excitement, or slothfulness, or selfishness—all these things bias the mind of a man against religion. He feels that GOD'S Word condemns them, therefore he is prejudiced against it; he does not give himself a fair chance of believing it. If indeed his heart is touched by the spirit of repentance, then the prejudice is removed—he discovers that the promises of GOD'S Word are

exactly what his soul requires. But while he is obdurate and impenitent, or careless and worldly, there is, as it were, a premium on unbelief.

Again, there is no surer evidence of an evil heart than ingratitude. The Christian believes that the Gospel is the most transcendent instance of goodness and mercy that can be imagined. That GOD should send HIS SON, and that He should voluntarily offer Himself, to die for the sins of men is, in his view, an exhibition of loving-kindness so exalted that the devotion of his life and every faculty to GOD'S service will be an inadequate return. But I apprehend that there are many persons in the present day who really have never given themselves the trouble seriously to consider the claims which GOD has on them; they are so careless and indifferent that they have never thought much about it. Knowing all the while what is the belief of Christians, aware that the best men amongst whom they live are believers in the wondrous love of GOD, yet they dare to disregard it, and, in their folly, put it from them almost without a thought. The most astonishing act of goodness ever conceived, nay, almost beyond conception, they are so insane, so ungrateful as to disregard. Perhaps some frivolous objection has presented itself to their

mind, some sneer at GOD'S ministers, some fancied difficulty; or it may be some subtle infidel has poisoned their minds, and they pass by the wondrous love of GOD as scarce worthy of their consideration.

And it is very remarkable how slight the difference is between scepticism and confirmed infidelity. Scepticism, as interpreted by those who avow themselves sceptics, is a state of doubt, inquiry, free thought, and so forth. Well, if a man has doubts, let him set about to solve them; and if he does so in honest sincerity GOD will help him in his task. But this is, I fear, seldom the course adopted. Sceptics never seem to come to an end of their inquiries, or to solve their doubts. Scepticism is a chronic disease; persons infected by it seldom emancipate themselves from their unhappy state, but live and die doubting, and awake only to certainty. "He who doubts," says Paschal, "but seeks not to have his doubts removed, is at once the most criminal and the most unhappy of mortals. If together with this he is tranquil and self-satisfied, or makes his state a topic of mirth and self-gratulation, I have not words to describe so insane a creature[1]." I cannot but think that

[1] Quoted from Newman's "Grammar of Assent."

this describes the state of most sceptics. They have never seriously considered the position in which they are placed. "With a light heart" they encounter the most tremendous peril; and, if the belief of the civilized world proves true, they will find themselves irretrievably lost, without a hope of recovery.

LETTER XXVII.

WANT OF FIRMNESS OF FAITH.

THE conservation of energy, says Mrs. Somerville, on the authority of Professor Faraday, "is a principle in physics as large and sure as that of the indestructibility of matter or the invariability of gravity. No hypothesis should be admitted nor any assertion of a fact credited, that denies this principle. No view should be inconsistent or incompatible with it. Many of our hypotheses in the present state of science may not comprehend it, and may be unable to suggest its consequences; but none should oppose or contradict it." That is to say, if a theory or principle has been established beyond a question, and any facts should be discovered which seem to contradict it, "so much the worse for the facts." Well, I am disposed to go along with Mrs. Somerville in the statement, if only she will extend her principle to other matters. There are no doubt some principles in science established on so indisputable

a basis, that they are part of one's intellectual self, and if any facts should appear to contradict them, we should at once be sure that there was some mistake. There is a time when a sufficient induction or testimony or experiment or other evidence has been adduced to confirm a point so absolutely that we at once disregard any objection which may be brought against it. For instance, we have no doubt whatever that the earth moves round on its own axis, though to all appearance it is the sun that moves. I fully admit the theory enunciated by Professor Faraday, and adopted by Mrs. Somerville, and allow that when a principle is really established on such grounds as to approve itself undeniably to the mind and conscience, then "no hypothesis should be admitted, nor any assertion of a fact credited, that denies the principle."

Apply now this principle to Revelation. We receive on undoubted authority—the authority of GOD Himself, Who cannot err—the great facts and doctrines of our Faith. We have as firm belief in them as in our own existence. They are the principles of our life. We believe that GOD commissioned His prophets and apostles, and lastly His very SON Himself, to reveal to us the Gospel, in order that it might be the

guide of our life, and the guarantee of our immortality. We believe that the Revelation of GOD'S Word rests on such a sure foundation that it cannot be moved. Are we not then, on the very principles of Science itself, justified in disregarding any possible objection which may be made to it? Ought any facts or arguments to weigh one feather's weight against the settled conviction of our minds and consciences, that the Bible is the Word of GOD, and all contained in it is true? May we not, *on philosophical principles* even, put aside as irrelevant all such objections—and entertain not the smallest doubt that the day will come when all philosophic difficulties will be found to be perfectly consistent with GOD'S revealed Truth?

"O that theologians [and other Christians too] had one-tenth of the faith of the men of science," lately said a Member of Convocation. There are those who declare that no argument on earth should induce them to believe a miracle. May not the Christian assert with equal or tenfold energy that no power on earth could induce him to disbelieve the truth of the Gospel. There have been those who have felt and maintained this principle. There have been saints and martyrs who have yielded

their bodies to the flame and axe, rather than renounce their faith, "youths who have defied pagan tyrants, maidens who were silent under torture," of whom the world was not worthy.

Alas, where is this firm practical faith to be found in the present day? If persecution should arise, no doubt there would be some martyrs found. But if we are to judge from the course of events, this heroic faith has too generally degenerated into inconsistency and compromise, if it be not well nigh extinct upon the earth. It is a strange phenomenon, the persistency and energy with which the opponents of the Church, and of religion altogether, push their pernicious opinions, and the tameness and weakness with which the friends of religion submit to their dictation.

As a well-known churchman has said, there seems to be "no backbone" in the present generation—no fixed determination to stand up for the Truth. There is no lack of zeal of a certain sort—zeal in building churches, multiplying services and the like. But of that particular zeal which consists in contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, there is a sad deficiency. Men are so afraid of being called bigots and narrow

minded, that they are ready to give up or compromise what they know to be the Truth.

Perhaps there is no one thing which has more surely caused the spread of infidelity amongst persons of ordinary education, than the absurd deference paid to men simply because they are clever, even though they are professed unbelievers. For my own part, I have advisedly spoken my mind in these letters. Without deviating as I trust from the line of Christian courtesy and charity, I have not hesitated to speak of the clever sceptic as a most mistaken and unhappy person, and much to be avoided by all those who wish to live and die in the Christian Faith.

LETTER XXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

And now, my good friend, I am bringing my series of letters to a conclusion. You will, I fear, think them rather desultory. But remember I am not writing a formal treatise, but rather such observations as I trust you and your friends may find useful for the present time.

As a general and most consolatory rule, we may take to ourselves the saying of our Lord, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." It is not so much learning, or skill, or ability, it is not the criticism of a clever intellect, which will enable men to learn God's truths; for you see, alas! constant examples of men of very high intellect—not perhaps the highest—making shipwreck of their faith and falling into direst heresies. Strange that men should be cursed by their very intellect—that the very power of reasoning which God has given them in order

that they might understand His will should be employed to discover cavils and objections. Yet so, alas! it is. The chief heresies which have vexed the Church, and which still vex it, have been the product of great but irregular intellects, following their own vain fancies unaided by the Spirit of Truth; while the humble and holy men of heart have pursued the safe and even tenor of their way, and lived and died in the sanctuary of GOD'S Church. The best judges of truth and right doctrine have ever been those who, with an honest and upright heart, endeavour to do the will of GOD. It is not learning or intellect which will save a man from error or loss, but humble obedience to GOD'S will.

Our lot is cast in perilous times. We need not fear that GOD will desert His Church or suffer it to be destroyed. But though GOD'S Church is safe from falling by virtue of His gracious promise, yet there may be great peril to individual souls. There seems to be just now a passing cloud floating over us, which has exercised an unwholesome influence over the practical mind of England. Such cloudy obscurations are, in a manner, epidemic and temporary, like the cholera or any other malignant plague or pestilence. The pestilence

comes and goes, carrying off many individuals, but leaving the community at large little affected by it, and after the pestilence has passed away it is perhaps in a more healthy state than it was before. As the cholera sweeps off the drunkard, the dissolute, those of enfeebled frame, or those who rashly and needlessly expose themselves to its infection; while those of healthy frame commonly remain intact; just so the epidemic of scepticism which is now hovering amongst us, may, it is to be feared, ruin many souls—unstable, diseased, ill-conditioned souls, those who are evil livers in any way, the proud and conceited, those who despise or neglect prayer and other safeguards; while the sound in heart, the consistent doers of GOD'S will, we may hope will not only remain safe, but perchance be better for the temptation resisted.

Most of us must have had more or less brought before our notice the topics of the day concerning Holy Scripture and the doctrines of our faith. We cannot help reading them in the current literature, newspapers, reviews, pamphlets, and books of passing events. I fear there are few who are so fortunate as not to have had placed before them the doubts and difficulties of vain and unstable men. But it is

what we might have been led to expect by the prophetic words of the Apostle: "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

In these and other ways doubts about the truth of Holy Scripture are busily promulgated in the present day. The question is, how we should treat these matters—what notice we should take of them, if any. Are they such as should cause us any anxiety or disturbance of mind? We have been accustomed to walk in the faith of our fathers, to accept the teaching of the Church. These modern objections are not of our seeking—nay, rather they are annoying and disagreeable to us. We know full well the holy influence of Christian faith. We have seen those dear to us depart to their rest in the faith and fear of GOD. We have followed their remains to the grave, and joined in the consolatory expression of sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life. We ourselves hope for the same happy end, and humbly follow the same religious course. We believe surely that the precepts of CHRIST are holy, just, and pure—and that in proportion as men live in accordance with them they are better and happier. We have ourselves experienced, it may be, the happy effects of Christian prin-

ciple in helping us to overcome the temptation to anger, bitterness, or evil passion. We are satisfied—we want no change—our hope is, GOD helping us, to live a life of godliness and honesty in the faith of CHRIST, and attain to happiness hereafter.

But then come in these doubts and difficulties, which cross our path and force themselves on our notice, it may be in conversation or in some book or newspaper. What are we to do? Are we to ignore and pass them by, or are we to set to work to find out for ourselves whether there is any foundation for them? We have neither time nor inclination for the last. The study necessary for the thorough investigation of the matter is far beyond our power, unless we were to give up all other occupation. First, we should have to read the Holy Scripture in the original, if we wished to satisfy ourselves of its exact meaning. We know something of Greek, it may be, but not a word of Hebrew. Then, if we would make things quite certain, we must collate the different manuscripts which are in existence in order to discover which is the true reading: and for that purpose we must travel to distant countries, and visit the libraries where these manuscripts are preserved. This sort of study in itself requires the life of

any man—and without this we *must* take the testimony of others who have given their lives to the work. Then we should have to enter minutely into the conflicting and ever shifting theories of science—we must investigate the strata of the earth—inspect this or that fossil, and judge for ourselves whether it is genuine or fictitious. Without giving our life to this sort of study we cannot after all attain to certainty about it, because science itself is still in its infancy, geology is very imperfectly understood—there are millions of worlds, probably, of which the finest telescope yet made has not been able to discover the distance, or even existence; and the wonderful power of the microscope has just begun to open up a new field of inquiry about the origin and conditions of life.

It is absolutely impossible for men, even of intelligence and education, who are engaged in the ordinary business of the world to investigate these matters for themselves—and therefore the simple question with each one must be, am I safe in directing my life according to what I have received and been assured of as being the Word of GOD—what the Church of eighteen hundred years and what the Church of my baptism has received from ancient times as being

the true doctrine which GOD has revealed to man? May I receive the testimony which GOD has given of His SON, may I believe the testimony of Apostles and Evangelists who lived daily with our blessed LORD—saw all His miracles—heard His gracious words—and laid down their lives in attestation of their sincerity?—Am I safe in receiving and acting upon this testimony, and living and dying a Christian? or should I be safe if I adopted a contrary course?

I think there can be but one answer to these questions—let us live according to the Bible, and not be led astray by the doubts, and difficulties, and cavils which thoughtless and ungodly men are so unwise or wicked as to promulgate. If we can answer difficulties and explain objections, well: but if not, let us not be disturbed. Let us do our duty to GOD and our neighbour, and, though we cannot help in the present evil state of society having our ears shocked by cavils and blasphemies, let us only pray that GOD will change the hearts of those who utter them. Thus a man of good, honest, religious life may be safe against the contagion of doubt and infidelity, and need not be solicitous to answer cavils. Difficulties he knows there must be so long as we live in this im-

perfect state of being. But he has no doubt that all will be cleared up hereafter. He knows in Whom he puts his trust, and may be sure that his hope rests upon a good foundation. He finds such strength in the love of CHRIST, as enables him to overcome the world with all its sin and vanities. "Who is he," says the Apostle, "that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that JESUS is the SON of GOD?" The evil lusts and passions of the flesh are subdued before the Power that dwelleth in him. He is begotten again into a lively hope. He knows that his prayers are heard—that GOD is his friend. He looks forward with a sure hope and confidence to a blessed futurity of happiness with GOD in heaven, after the pains and trials of this mortal life are over. Such is the assurance of the true believer. "He has the witness in himself." He has no need of external evidence; however necessary such evidence may be to some, he has got beyond that stage of faith. CHRIST is formed within him—a new heart and a sure hope are given him.

If any one who reads these lines is still in doubt, let him lose no time in solving the great question on which all depends. First let him put from him every thing which he knows is sinful in GOD'S sight (for it is sin that chiefly

hinders faith). Let him put from him all known sin, and humbly pray for enlightenment, using such means as are within the scope of his ability, and if he sets to work with an honest and true heart, a real desire to know what is right, let him be sure that the HOLY SPIRIT will aid his infirmities enlighten his understanding, and lead him in the way of Truth.

POSTSCRIPT.

DARWINISM.

SINCE writing the above I have read "The Descent of Man," by Charles Darwin, on which I think it necessary to make a few remarks.

First, let me advert to a mutual complaint made by men of science, and men of religion, especially the clergy, against each other. Scientific men complain that the clergy do not enter into their theories, and attempt to put them down by dogmatism. The clergy, on the other hand, complain that men of science have not the least regard for the revelation of the Bible; and if any thing occurs in the Bible which contradicts their views, they set it aside summarily as unworthy of consideration. Now contempt and dogmatism on either side are misplaced. Let each party speak respectfully of the other. At the same time let them not fall into the opposite error of pretending an admiration which they do not really feel. That is a greater mistake, if possible, than the other.

An excellent modern writer, speaking of Renan, says, "No one is more ready than I am to do justice to the extraordinary literary merits of the *Vie de Jésus*, its lucid style, its descriptive powers, its manifold charms." Why go out of the way thus to compliment a man who has done more, perhaps, than any other writer to spread infidelity in the present generation? We need not abuse him, as writers in the last century used to abuse their opponents; but why praise a man whose principles we utterly condemn?

As regards Mr. Darwin, he has brought forward a number of curious facts, partly from his own observation, partly from the books of others about natural history; but he appears to me to have failed entirely in proving his point. He admits that "many of the views which have been advanced are highly speculative, and some no doubt will prove erroneous;" and the whole argument he is aware will be considered by many to be extremely "irreligious." Certainly believers in the Bible would be of this opinion. Mr. Darwin, speaking of his book, says, with complacency (vol. i. p. 153), "I have at least, as I hope, done good service in aiding to overthrow the dogma of separate creation," that is to say, to refute the statement of Holy Scripture in the first chapter of Genesis.

The Bible distinctly says that GOD created the animal race at different times, Mr. Darwin hopes that he has "done good service" in proving the contrary.

Mr. Darwin's theory is simply this, that all animals, man included, have grown up from one primordial organism. The first father of the animal race was an ascidian. Now "ascidians are invertebrate, hermaphrodite, marine creatures, permanently attached to a support. They hardly appear like animals, and consist of a simple, tough, leathery sack, with two small projecting orifices. . . . Their larvæ resemble tadpoles in shape, and have the power of swimming freely about." (See vol. i. p. 205.) These creatures have a spinal cord, and while some of them remain ascidian to the present day—others, more ambitious, developed themselves into fishes having a vertebra; fishes presently progressed into amphibious animals, as seals; seals became developed into "marsupial animals," as opossums; opossums became more perfect mammals, as lions, tigers, elephants, horses, apes, and monkeys. At last there appeared a "hairy quadruped, furnished with tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits," and from this is descended "the wonder of creation, man." As it appears to

me, all that Mr. Darwin has done is to set down a catalogue of animals in a progressive order, and suppose that they have in the course of ages passed into each other. Nothing could be easier than to make such a catalogue. But as to proof that they actually have so passed; that any one member of these families has really so changed; that an ascidian has ever become a vertebrate, or a seal a monkey, or a monkey a man—as to any evidence of such transmutation I confess that I see none whatever in the whole book. Darwin, the elder, used to say, "Give me a fibre susceptible of irritation, and I will make a tree, a dog, a horse, a man." So might any one set down a catalogue of animals according to a system of progressive development; but we have a right, before believing, to ask for some proof of the development of one genus or family from another.

I have read Mr. Darwin's volumes through from beginning to end, and I declare that there is not a single argument which proves this most extraordinary theory. There is abundant proof of the varieties of *species*, but not a single fact or argument in favour of the theory of ascidians becoming vertebrate, vertebrates amphibian, amphibians marsupial, marsupials

mammal; nor of the appearance of the hairy quadruped, furnished with tail and pointed ears, who is supposed to be the ancestor of man. Mr. Darwin gives the most interesting accounts of the possible and actual varieties of *species*, but produces not one single proof of the change of one *genus* of animals into another.

To take a familiar instance. Let us go together into a poultry yard, and there we find fowls of all sorts—Cochin China, Brahma Pootra, Malays, Hamburgs, Dorkings, Sebright Bantams, game Bantams, &c., and we readily admit that all these may have descended from the first created cock and hen. Nay, from Mr. Darwin's vivid description we almost fancy we can understand how all these beautiful varieties grow.—But see, here comes another tenant of the poultry yard—a duck, with her young progeny waddling along. We at once perceive that this is quite a different sort of creature. No one will persuade us, without strong evidence, that this duck ever sprang from a cock and hen of the gallinaceous tribe—or that if we went up to the most remote antiquity, their pedigree can be traced to the same ancestors. But look again, there is a flock of pigeons, Pouters, Tumblers, Carriers, Capuchins. It is well known that pigeon fanciers, by crossing the

breeds can develope almost any colour or peculiarity of pigeons. But where is the man who can develope a hawk out of a pigeon, or a pigeon out of a hawk, or would believe that they sprang from a common ancestry? Bring forward proof enough, and of course I am ready to believe any thing; but Mr. Darwin gives no proof whatever of the transmutation of genera, even of ducks into chickens, or pigeons into hawks, whereas to make out his point he must show that shrimps and elephants, butterflies and tigers, were all descended from the same primitive organism.

Go now with me to the Zoological Gardens. —Look at the well-dressed people walking about, the merry children sporting, and will any one tell me that they are related to those hideous monkeys and apes who are grinning at them from the adjoining cages? The very faces and expression of the monkeys show that they are utterly destitute of the light of reason. They are as different from each other as light from darkness.

I do not profess to know more of science than what most men of education gather in these days in the course of education and reading, but I do claim to have knowledge enough to judge of the bearings of an argument, and to

form an opinion whether there is any truth in Mr. Darwin's theory of the descent of man from an ape. And I suspect that even Mr. Darwin's scientific brethren are not at all prepared to vouch for the correctness of his deductions. "In more senses than one Mr. Darwin has drawn heavily upon the scientific tolerance of his age. He has drawn heavily upon time in his development of species, and has drawn adventurously upon matter in his theory of pangenesis." So says Professor Tyndal. Mr. Wallace, who as an advocate of natural selection ranks next to Mr. Darwin himself, yet does not venture to apply the theory to the development of man from brutes, but carefully guards himself against admitting so extravagant a dogma.

It has struck me in reading Mr. Darwin's book, that all the curious facts which he describes so graphically, respecting the changes and development of species (not genera) apply at least as much to the facts recorded in the Bible of the several acts of creation, as to any hypothesis of development of the animal creation from one primordial organism. Taking the Bible account in its simple sense of different pairs, male and female, of the various families having come upon the earth progressively as

it was prepared for their use, Mr. Darwin's notions of the natural selection, struggle for existence, sexual selection and the varieties of species caused by these means, seem all to fall into their proper places without the smallest difficulty. Various species would soon be developed—the stronger would thrive, the weaker be exterminated—females would choose the most beautiful males, the strongest males would monopolize the females—some creatures would be preserved by their swiftness, some by their colour, in short all these curious facts which make up the subject of Mr. Darwin's book would come to pass; and yet not a single family vary in essential points from the time when it was first created.

Moreover all the signs which he adduces of the gradual development of man from a savage state are just as applicable to the case of the many degraded and uncivilized races which unquestionably have overspread a great portion of this earth—if we receive without any doubt or hesitation the accounts which the Bible affords us of a continued civilized line both before and after the flood. In short, I cannot discern in Mr. Darwin's elaborate book any argument whatever to disprove the revealed history of the Bible, that God at different times

created the various inhabitants of the earth, and last of all created man in His own image. And though Mr. Darwin's book has failed entirely, as I believe even his own friends will admit, to prove the particular point at issue, "the descent of man," yet he has incidentally done good service to the cause of truth. First, he has proved beyond a question that there is no ground whatever for the opinion that the different races of the human family are distinct from each other. His elaborate illustrations of the variation of different species of each family, furnish ample evidence that there is not the slightest ground for doubting that the different races of mankind, the Caucasian and the Negro, the Mongolian and the Red Indian, are all descendants of our first parents Adam and Eve.

Lastly, Mr. Darwin has added considerable weight to the argument of Paley, by showing proofs of the wonderful wisdom of GOD in providing for the wants of His creatures, and the marks every where of elaborate design in the construction, not only of this world itself, and its more magnificent objects, but of His care for the sustentation and preservation of the smallest insect. Truly we may say with the Psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of GOD, and the firmament showeth His handy-

work. . . . O LORD, how manifold are Thy works; in wisdom hast Thou made them all. . . . What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him lower than the angels to crown him with glory and worship. Thou madest him to have dominion of the works of Thy hands, and Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and all the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the sea. O LORD, our Governor, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world!"

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